**ROCKY ROAD**

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**EXT. PITTSBURGH SUBURB - RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY**

Summer sun beats down on aging brick homes with tiny porches. Faded U.S. and Pittsburgh Steelers flags on display. One-car garages, rutted gravel driveways. Not quite middle class.

BLAIR FRY (13) zips along on a mountain bike, a bit oversized for his slim body. He throws a glance over his shoulder --

ROCKY (3), a pit bull mix, keeps pace, gallops with strong, fluid strides. A handsome, healthy, happy dog. Blair's dog.

**EXT. WAYNE'S HOUSE - DAY**

Small, single-story. Broken rain gutter. Crumbling sidewalk. In the driveway, a pickup truck loaded with lumber and tools.

Blair bikes over the front lawn and through the open gate of a chain-link fenced backyard. Rocky follows.

**INT. WAYNE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

Worn vinyl flooring, outdated appliances. But neat and clean.

Back door pushes wide, Blair and Rocky dart in. Blair beelines to the fridge. Opens it, surveys, grabs a chicken drumstick.

He chomps into it. He tears off a piece of meat for eager Rocky. They share the drumstick, bite for bite.

Blair hears two people laugh -- he freezes.

He locks eyes with his dog, points to the floor --

Rocky sits. He wears a distinctive black-and-gold collar.

Blair tiptoes into...

THE HALLWAY

He creeps toward a door, ajar. He cranes his neck, peers in --

His eyes go wide, he recoils... backs away, hurries into...

THE KITCHEN

He motions to Rocky, they slip out the back door.

**EXT. WAYNE'S HOUSE - BACKYARD TREEHOUSE - DAY**

Blair and Rocky scoot up a custom-made wooden staircase and into the nicely crafted treehouse.

**EXT. WAYNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

A hard-driven Subaru compact wagon whips into the driveway.

**INT. BACKYARD TREEHOUSE - NIGHT**

A cell phone dimly lights the wood enclosure.

Blair lies on a sleeping bag, listens to music through headphones. Rocky nuzzled by his side.

Blair pours Cheetos from bag to mouth, a few miss the mark.

Rocky snatches up the stray cheese puffs, chomps away. Stops. Ears prick, head turns sharply.

Blair pulls off headphones. Hears indistinct arguing. Winces.

He crawls to the open doorway, looks back at his dog.

BLAIR
Rocky, stay.

**INT. WAYNE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Secondhand sofa. Big-screen TV. Weight bench and barbells. Deer antler trophies and an Iron City Beer sign on the walls.

WAYNE (33), a suburban redneck, squirms on the sofa. He wears a tight T-shirt to showcase his sculpted physique.

WAYNE
You're crazy, Melissa. Where you getting this?

MELISSA FRY (31) stands firm. Dark tattoos creep beyond the sleeves of her black dress. A tough, practical woman... and undeniably attractive, be it a blessing or a curse.

Blair rushes in, gives Melissa a look of concern.

She waves a hand to say, "I'm okay, I got this."

Wayne smirks, nods knowingly. Blair locks eyes with him.

BLAIR
I saw her.

WAYNE
Saw who?

BLAIR
She might be a Steelers fan.

WAYNE
Huh?

BLAIR
Team colors. Black undies, gold bra.

Wayne sneers.

WAYNE
So you ratted me out to Mommy. Well done, small fry.

BLAIR
Don't call me that, Wayne.

Wayne stands up, gets in Blair's flushed face.

WAYNE
Forgive me, big man in the making. Eat your vegetables and do your homework, Blair. And someday you'll join the Army, too.

Melissa fumes, turns Blair away -- but he spins back at Wayne.

WAYNE
Whoa. I think you wanna hit me.

Blair scowls, fists clenched. Wayne grins.

WAYNE
C'mon, Blair, hit me. I deserve it.

Wayne closes his eyes, juts his chin forward. Blair freezes.

Melissa grabs her son's arm and ushers him away.

MELISSA
We're not living like this.

Wayne plops back down on the sofa, snatches up the TV remote.

**INT. WAYNE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY**

ON THE BIG-SCREEN TV

An animated American soldier mows down blood-spurting enemies.

Blair slouches on the sofa, works the video game like a pro. Rocky curled up on the floor nearby.

Melissa steps in, wears a tank top, sips on a green smoothie. Classic realism tattoos, including a gnarly tree and snake-and-dagger, cover her arms down to the wrist.

Blair doesn't take his eyes off the video game.

MELISSA
Did you eat?

BLAIR
Yeah.

MELISSA
Feed Rocky?

BLAIR
Yeah.

MELISSA
Pause?

Blair pauses the video game, gives full attention.

MELISSA
I'm looking at rentals before work today. Come with me?

Blair powers off the TV. Grabs his phone.

BLAIR
Can't, I'm shooting hoops with Toby.

Blair jumps off the sofa, scurries away. As he disappears, he whistles out: whis-whis-whis-wheet!

Rocky lets loose a single bark and bolts after Blair.

MELISSA
Helmet and leash!

**EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY**

Blair coasts on his mountain bike. He wears a helmet and bulky backpack. Rocky, on a leash, trots beside.

Blair stops. The dog gazes up and tail-wags like wild. Blair leans down, disconnects the leash. Smiles.

BLAIR
Rock, let's roll.

Blair races off. Rocky sprints after him, keeps pace.

**EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY**

Blair sits in a grassy area, beside the vacant court. Rocky close by. Blair looks into the distance. Checks his phone.

He pulls a basketball from his backpack. Rocky perks up, stares at the ball. Blair rolls it out into the grass.

BLAIR
Get the ball, boy.

Rocky runs, pounces on the ball. Paws it, pushes it.

Blair crawls over, grabs the ball. Hugs it, rolls in the grass. Rocky bounds back and forth, noses in for the ball.

Blair laughs, tosses the ball aside, Rocky chases.

**EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY (LATER)**

Blair shoots basketball, alone. Rocky lounges courtside. Blair tries a jump shot, it clanks off the front of the rim.

His phone chimes. He pulls it from his pocket, reads.

BLAIR
It's just you and me, Rocko.

**EXT. 7-ELEVEN STORE - DAY**

Blair and Rocky sit at the curb. Blair munches on beef jerky.

He holds out his phone for a selfie, pulls Rocky in close.

BLAIR
Rock star, get in here. Smile.

Blair smiles, clicks photo. Gives Rocky a piece of jerky.

**EXT. VERDUCCI'S RESTAURANT - DAY**

Melissa's Subaru darts across traffic, into the parking lot of an ivy-covered building. Sign: "Verducci's Ristorante."

**INT. VERDUCCI'S RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - DAY**

Melissa hurries through, wears a long-sleeve black dress.

She pauses by a big steamy pot. Samples red sauce. Furtive glance. Adds oregano. Moves on.

ANTHONY (early 40s), always neatly groomed and wearing a knockoff Italian suit, steps into Melissa's path. She halts.

ANTHONY
Nice of you to drop by.

MELISSA
I texted you. I was busy.

ANTHONY
Me too, covering for you.

Waitress HOLLY (early 20s), unassuming, stands behind Anthony, catches Melissa's eye. She mouths, "We're not busy."

Anthony spins around. Holly raises an innocent eyebrow.

ANTHONY
Get to work, both of you.

As Melissa passes, Anthony touches her arm, stops her.

ANTHONY
You're showing.

Melissa's dress sleeves are pushed up, tattoos exposed. She yanks the sleeves down to her wrists.

**INT. BACKYARD TREEHOUSE - NIGHT**

Blair eats cannelloni from a to-go container. Rocky watches.

Melissa sits at the top of the staircase, outside the doorway.

MELISSA
I brought boxes home, I want you to start packing your room.

BLAIR
When we moving?

MELISSA
As soon as I find a decent place we can afford. And that allows dogs.

Blair sets down the container. Rocky dives in, devours the remaining cannelloni in gulps and slurps. Melissa gawks.

BLAIR
Can we get a house?

MELISSA
Too expensive.

BLAIR
I wish you had a better job. So back to a stupid apartment.

MELISSA
Smaller than what we're used to here.

BLAIR
Whatever. Not like we're a real family here anyhow.

Rocky licks the container clean.

Melissa scans the treehouse's dirty, bare-wood interior.

MELISSA
Are you sure you want to stay outside? I can sleep on the sofa.

BLAIR
That's okay. We like it out here.

Blair takes the spotless container from Rocky, hands it to his mom. The dog looks at them like, "Hey, I wasn't done!"

**INT. WAYNE'S HOUSE - BLAIR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Wall hangings include team banners of the Pittsburgh Steelers, Pirates and Penguins, a U.S. Army poster, and a framed photo of a smiling young man in Army fatigues.

Melissa slumps on the bed. Slips off her shoes, rubs her feet.

She scans the room, sees clothing, shoes, books, video games, baseball glove, dog leash, basketball, half-eaten rotten apple.

Wayne slinks in. Melissa tenses, sits up.

WAYNE
What's with the boxes in the hallway?

MELISSA
You know. I warned you.

WAYNE
Is Doug bailing you out?

MELISSA
Absolutely not.

He touches and wiggles his jaw. Sits beside her on the bed.

WAYNE
Melissa, please don't go. What do you want? A thousand apologies? We can still make this work.

He strokes her arm. Leans in for a kiss. She pulls away.

MELISSA
You're kidding, right?

Rejected. He hops off the bed, stands up.

MELISSA
This hasn't worked for a long time. And I don't even care who she is. We'll be out of your house by the end of the month.

He shakes his head and strides out.

**INT. WAYNE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

In two skillets, sausages sizzle and scrambled eggs steam.

Melissa sips on a green smoothie. Adds avocado and feta cheese to scrambled eggs, mixes it in with a metal spatula.

Blair butters toast. Rocky observes, wags his tail.

BLAIR
Pirates won last night. They beat --

Melissa puts a finger to her lips, silences Blair.

They hear a door open... Wayne speaks... the door closes.

Melissa bites her lip, resumes cooking.

Wayne strolls in, shirtless, wears only jeans. Makes no eye contact. He reaches directly into the skillet of sausages --

Melissa whacks his hand with the spatula. He jerks his hand back, rubs away the sting.

WAYNE
There's nothing to hide now. And... She's moving in.

Wayne feels Blair's glare. He pivots, stares back. Blair grits his teeth, trembles ever so slightly.

WAYNE
You got something to say?

BLAIR
You're -- an asshole.

WAYNE
Ouch. If only your father were here to see what a tough guy you've become.

BLAIR
If he was, he'd hurt you worse than Doug did.

WAYNE
Too bad he got drunk and wrapped his motorcycle around a tree, before he even finished basic training.

Blair, puzzled, turns to his mom. She snarls at Wayne.

WAYNE
You said you wanted him to know the whole truth when he's old enough. He's old enough.

Wayne snatches a sausage link and struts back to his bedroom.

**EXT. WAYNE'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY**

The Subaru is filled with boxes and bags. More on the roof, topped with Blair's bike, tied down with rope.

Blair sits in the front passenger seat, Rocky at his feet.

Melissa pauses by the driver's open door, Wayne stands close. She squints her eyes in disgust.

MELISSA
The big TV is mine, I bought it.

Wayne makes a "So what?" face.

MELISSA
It won't fit in my car. Will you bring it to us after we're moved in?

He hesitates... nods. She steps into the car.

**INT./EXT. MELISSA'S SUBARU - DAY**

Parked at a fast-food restaurant. As Melissa speaks into her phone, Blair chomps on a hamburger and sees out his window --

A HOMELESS MAN, grimy and weather-beaten, rummages through a trash can and digs out a few recyclables.

MELISSA
Does that include utilities?... We have a dog, he's really good... Mixed breed, medium size... My name's Melissa Fry, we'll be there in five minutes.

She drops her phone into the cup holder. Starts the engine.

Blair shrugs off the homeless man and feeds his last bite of burger to Rocky.

BLAIR
All you ever told me was my father died in an accident when he was in the Army.

MELISSA
Not now, Blair.

Blair scrunches his empty food bag into a ball. Pouts.

MELISSA
He was home on leave for the holidays. After we got back from Christmas Eve services, he went out drinking and crashed his motorcycle.

BLAIR
So like Wayne said.

MELISSA
You were a baby when it happened. I didn't want you to know all the details... until you had grown up and could understand.

She gives him a few moments as he thinks it over. Finally --

BLAIR
Services, like at a church? You and my dad went to church? You always say you don't believe in God.

Melissa huffs, wrenches her hands on the steering wheel.

MELISSA
All that matters to me is in this car, and we don't have a place to live yet. That's what I believe.

BLAIR
Okay, Mom. Let's go.

She throws the car into gear, glances over at Rocky.

MELISSA
This isn't going to be easy.

**EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX #1 - DAY**

Blair stands with Rocky, on a leash and sitting perfectly still. Melissa looks toward the deteriorating building.

MELISSA
Can we see the apartment?

APARTMENT MANAGER #1 (70s), a gruff little lady wearing bedroom slippers, chews a wad of gum and observes Rocky.

MANAGER #1
Waste of time. That's a pit bull.

MELISSA
He's an angel. Go ahead, pet him.

MANAGER #1
I'm not going near that dog.

The manager waves them off and shuffles away.

Blair is stunned. Melissa gives him an "I told you so" look.

**EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX #2 - DAY**

On level sidewalk, just outside an apartment's front door. Blair stands on a bathroom scale, struggles to hold Rocky.

APARTMENT MANAGER #2 (40s), so obese he can barely see past his belly, reads the scale. Melissa reads it too.

MANAGER #2
Minus the boy's weight, the dog weighs nearly sixty pounds. And that far exceeds our forty-pound limit.

MELISSA
So you don't discriminate by breed... Just by weight?

MANAGER #2
Big dogs cause more damage. He's too big.

Blair catches Melissa's eye and glances at the manager's huge body. She shakes her head to say, "Don't go there."

**INT. MELISSA'S SUBARU - TRAVELING - DAY**

As Melissa drives, she speaks into her phone, in hand.

MELISSA
Anthony, I can't work today, no way. I'll be there tomorrow. Bye.

She disconnects the call. Frustrated. She shoots a glance at Blair, his phone idle in hand.

MELISSA
You find a friend Rocky can stay with?

BLAIR
Mom, you know who we should call.

MELISSA
Don't say Uncle Doug. He lives too far away and he's usually not home.

BLAIR
He might know someone who'll help us?

MELISSA
We can do this, we don't need him.

**EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX #3 - DAY**

Well-kept. Nice rose bushes. Sign: "Royal Oak Apartments."

Melissa stands with MR. CHILCOTT (60s), military style buzz cut, favors one leg. Vigilant over his property and tenants.

Rocky lies, stares up at Blair's hand. Blair raises his hand.

BLAIR
Up.

Rocky sits up. Blair kneels close, raises both hands.

BLAIR
Sit pretty.

Rocky holds up his front legs. Blair extends his arms.

BLAIR
Rocky hug.

Rocky puts his paws on Blair's shoulders. Blair hugs him.

MR. CHILCOTT
Young man, you trained this dog yourself? How'd you do it?

Blair pops up onto his feet, chest out proudly.

BLAIR
Watched a lot of YouTube videos. Just did what they said.

MR. CHILCOTT
Impressive. Seems to be a wonderful dog. But, I'm sorry, rules are rules.

MELISSA
Please. You want a larger deposit? Want me to sign some kind of waiver?

MR. CHILCOTT
Sorry.

MELISSA
You apartment managers. You're all narrow-minded and heartless.

MR. CHILCOTT
This is business, it's a liability issue. We have to have insurance, and most carriers won't cover pit bulls. I don't make the rules.

**INT. MELISSA'S SUBARU - DAY**

Parked outside Royal Oak Apartments. Melissa hangs her head.

Rocky sits at Blair's feet. Blair's phone chimes, he reads.

BLAIR
Mom! Toby says Rocky can stay at his house for as long as we want.

Melissa perks up.

MELISSA
That gives us time to find a place we can live with Rocky.

They slap a joyous high five. Blair extends his open hand to Rocky, the dog paws it. Laughter.

Blair's phone chimes again.

BLAIR
He says bring him after seven o'clock.

MELISSA
Blair, this place is nice. Should we try to get an apartment right here?

He peers out at the two-story apartment building.

**EXT. ROYAL OAK APARTMENTS - DAY**

Melissa helps Blair remove his bike from atop the car's roof.

MELISSA
Mr. Chilcott said there's a bike rack by the corner of the building.

BLAIR
I think he likes Rocky.

MELISSA
Yeah, and he said if he sees the dog step one foot inside the apartment, he'll evict us on the spot.

Melissa waves toward the window of a first-floor apartment -- from which Mr. Chilcott watches their every move.

**EXT. TOBY'S HOUSE - DAY**

Warm, inviting. Large American flag hangs by the front door.

TOBY'S MOM and DAD (late 30s), conservative, stand with TOBY (13), a boy prone to flights of fancy.

Facing them, Melissa and Blair, in shorts and grimy T-shirts. Blair holds a bag of dog food, bowls and Rocky on a leash.

MELISSA
I can't thank you enough for doing this. A huge help, you're awesome.

Melissa bends over and pets Rocky. Toby's dad enjoys an eyeful of her body's curves. Toby's mom doesn't.

MELISSA
We'll come see him a lot, I promise.

BLAIR
Here's his bowls, and lots of food.

TOBY'S MOM
How many days?

MELISSA
Maybe till the end of summer?

Toby's mom scrunches her face. Not good. She prods her husband.

TOBY'S DAD
We have two cats inside. So we were thinking if it's just for a few days, the dog could stay in the backyard.

Blair eyeballs Toby for help -- but he looks away.

BLAIR
Live outside? There's no fence.

TOBY'S MOM
Oh, he'll need a doghouse and chain. Did you bring it?

Melissa takes a deep breath, Blair slumps.

**INT. MELISSA'S SUBARU - NIGHT**

Parked outside of Verducci's Restaurant. Blair in the front seat, Rocky lies in the now cleared back seat.

Driver's door opens, Melissa slips in, sits. Dejected.

MELISSA
I asked everybody. Even my boss. Nobody can take him.

BLAIR
Mom? What are we gonna do?

Melissa considers the options... and cringes.

**EXT. WAYNE'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT**

Wayne looks down his nose at Rocky. Such disappointment.

WAYNE
I got you the perfect puppy. Put up a fence. Built you both that great treehouse... And you raise him to be a pussy.

Blair holds dog food and bowls. Melissa waits, agitated. They've heard Wayne's tired spiel before.

BLAIR
I'll bike here every day to feed him and pick up all his poop.

Wayne smirks.

WAYNE
There's boarding kennels, board him somewhere for the summer.

MELISSA
You know I can't afford it.

WAYNE
And don't have any credit cards, since you filed bankruptcy.

She gives him a "Thanks for reminding me" scowl.

BLAIR
C'mon, Wayne. Please?

WAYNE
You'd let your dog live with an asshole?

BLAIR
I'm sorry I called you --

MELISSA
Blair, don't apologize.

Melissa stares Wayne down. No love lost here.

WAYNE
This isn't my problem. Work it out on your own.

Wayne charges off to his house.

Melissa and Blair plod back to their car, with Rocky.

**INT./EXT. MELISSA'S SUBARU - NIGHT**

Parked at Royal Oak Apartments. Melissa rests on the steering wheel, Blair rubs his tired eyes. Rocky lies in back seat.

BLAIR
Let's call Uncle Doug.

MELISSA
Half the time he's on the road, the other half he's drunk. Forget it.

Blair flings open his door, hops out, slams the door shut.

He yanks open the back door, climbs in and lies across the back seat with Rocky.

**INT. MELISSA'S SUBARU - NIGHT (LATER)**

All asleep. Blair and Rocky in back seat, Melissa in front.

**EXT. ROYAL OAK APARTMENTS - DAY**

Melissa walks down stairs. Wet hair, wears clean clothes.

Mr. Chilcott hobbles toward her, meets her at the bottom.

MR. CHILCOTT
G'morning. How was your first night?

MELISSA
Fine, thank you.

MR. CHILCOTT
I'll bring up a coffee table today, then we're good, you're furnished.

Melissa smiles and nods, opens her mouth to speak --

MR. CHILCOTT
And the three of you can't sleep overnight in the parking lot anymore.

He moves on, a strong pace despite his bad leg. She slouches.

**EXT. PARK - DAY**

Spacious, active. Many people and dogs.

Melissa's car pulls up. Blair, holding his basketball and a small cooler, climbs out with Rocky. Melissa drives off.

**INT. VERDUCCI'S RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

Vineyard wall murals. Red-and-white tablecloths. Crowded.

Melissa trudges along, empty tray in hand. Holly snags her, pulls her aside -- as Anthony marches up. Holly shrinks away.

MELISSA
Anthony, I won't miss another day.

ANTHONY
Good to know.

He smiles, self-satisfied, like he's just won his first humanitarian award. She draws back, puzzled.

ANTHONY
I want you to meet the Grandersons.

**INT. VERDUCCI'S RESTAURANT - BOOTH - NIGHT**

Melissa sits with MR. and MRS. GRANDERSON (late 30s) and their two children, GIRL (8) and BOY (5). A happy nuclear family, eyes focused on Melissa's cell phone.

GIRL
He's so cute!

BOY
More pictures!

Melissa swipes, shows more photos. Mr. and Mrs. Granderson share looks of approval. Anthony hovers proudly nearby.

MR. GRANDERSON
Our last dog was a pit mix. Pumpkin made it to fourteen.

MRS. GRANDERSON
How is he with children?

MELISSA
Oh, he's great with kids. He's gentle, and smart, and loves to play.

MR. GRANDERSON
Health problems? Aggression issues?

MELISSA
No, nothing. He's good.

MR. GRANDERSON
Well, kids? Want a new dog?

GIRL
I do! Let's get him!

BOY
Yeah! Yeah!

MELISSA
I have to speak with my son first, it's really his dog.

MR. GRANDERSON
There's one issue. This has to happen fast. We're moving tomorrow, up to Cleveland.

MELISSA
Cleveland?

MRS. GRANDERSON
We were planning to get a new dog after we moved, but maybe this is all God's intentions.

Melissa looks to Anthony, he gives a reassuring nod.

MR. GRANDERSON
I'll give you our address. If you want to do it, bring him first thing in the morning. We'll need time to get acquainted before we hit the road.

MRS. GRANDERSON
Question. Is he good in cars?

Melissa feels overwhelmed -- but this question is easy.

MELISSA
Yeah. He likes cars.

**EXT. PARK - NIGHT**

Blair sits at the curb, elbows on knees and chin in hands. Rocky beside.

Melissa's car pulls up. Blair and Rocky climb into back seat.

**INT. MELISSA'S SUBARU - TRAVELING - NIGHT**

As Melissa drives, she peeks at Blair in the rear-view mirror.

MELISSA
Honey, we have to make some changes. Big ones. Real soon.

Blair yawns, droops onto Rocky.

BLAIR
I'm tired, Mom. I don't wanna talk.

**INT. MELISSA'S SUBARU - NIGHT**

Parked outside Royal Oak Apartments. Melissa scans the front of the building, looks toward Mr. Chilcott's apartment.

MELISSA
Keep your head down, stay quiet. We'll talk in the morning, okay?

She glances into the back seat -- Blair is sound asleep. Rocky looks directly at her -- she averts her eyes.

Melissa steps out, gently closes the door. Locks the car.

**EXT. ROYAL OAK APARTMENTS - DAY**

Melissa tiptoes down the stairway.

**INT. MELISSA'S SUBARU - DAY**

Melissa eases into the driver's seat.

MELISSA
Blair, go up and take a shower. I'll go get us some BK breakfast sandwiches. And I'll walk Rocky.

Blair creeps out of the car, closes the back door.

Melissa's pained eyes watch as her son trudges away. From the back seat, Rocky watches too.

**INT. APARTMENT - DAY (SERIES OF SHOTS)**

A) Blair soaks his head under a warm, cleansing shower.

B) He digs into a box, pulls out a T-shirt, puts it on.

C) He peers into the refrigerator, closes the door.

D) He checks his phone for messages. None. Pockets phone.

**INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Long couch, big circular wooden coffee table. No TV.

Blair sinks into the couch. He scoops his basketball up off the carpeted floor. Spins it on his finger, it falls aside.

He sits back, looks around, sizes up the place.

The front door opens, Melissa slips in. Blair jumps up, grabs food from the bag in her hands. Heads for the door.

MELISSA
Blair. Wait.

He turns back. She catches her breath. Tears in her eyes.

BLAIR
Mom? What's wrong?

She sets down the bag of food. In her hand is Rocky's collar.

Blair sees it. Instant dread.

**EXT. ROYAL OAK APARTMENTS - DAY**

Just another quiet, sunny, summer day. Until --

Blair bursts out of their apartment, crying. He clutches Rocky's collar, storms down the stairway. Melissa follows.

BLAIR
He's my dog! You can't do this!

MELISSA
Blair, stop yelling. Go back inside.

BLAIR
Call them! Get him back! Now!

MELISSA
I can't. We had to do it.

Mr. Chilcott and a few tenants come out of apartments, watch.

Blair charges down the sidewalk, away from Melissa.

MELISSA
Blair, stop. Where are you going?

He stops. Turns back. Crying, unhinged. Sees people staring. Tries to gather himself, wipes his nose with his forearm.

Melissa steps close, reaches out a comforting hand --

BLAIR
I hate you!

Blair makes a beeline back to the apartment.

END OF EXCERPT.