

PUSHING DAISIES

"Circus Circus"

Episode #3T7051

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FINAL DRAFT 
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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. LONGBOROUGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS - DAY

Pull off the forboding building and fly out over the trees...

NARRATOR

It's been 76 days, 2 hours and 37 minutes since Young Ned's father deposited him at the Longborough School for Boys. And this, Young Ned felt, was long enough.

EXT. WOODS AREA - DAY

Boy and Dog walk together...

NARRATOR

He is a gifted boy, able to bring dead things back to life with the touch of his finger. Tired of the dark and joyless boarding school, Young Ned and his dog, Digby, set out in search of a new beginning.

Young Ned stops to open and sip from his belt-canteen and to scratch Digby with his walking stick...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Alone in the forest, they didn't know what to expect. And least of all, they expected...

Ned looks ahead, perplexed...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...giant butterflies.

NED'S POV - EIGHT SIX-YEAR-OLD KIDS wearing big BUTTERFLY WINGS surround a tree. Their young TEACHER, MS. MOSS, stretches to reach a NEST on a branch just out of reach.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Ms. Moss believed every child was a butterfly at heart, and her kindergartners knew that "every caterpillar learns to fly." To ensure this fact was not forgotten, uniforms were required, as well as frequent nature walks.

Young Ned sets down his kerchief/satchel, walks to the tree and climbs up...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

On this day, Ms. Moss found herself just out of reach of an important lesson on the life cycle of the Yellow Canary.

Young Ned stretches to reach the--

ANGLE - THE NEST - Resting on the branch. Young Ned leans into frame, sees that the THREE BABY BIRDS are dead.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The Yellow Canaries, however, believed a better lesson might have been the risks of environmental toxins.

YOUNG NED - Looks back down at the smiling butterfly children. He puts his finger into the nest and as we see the TINY SPARK...

BASE OF A TREE - MOMENTS LATER

Young Ned carries down the nest, NOW with three LIVE baby birds, CHIRPING. The kids surround him excitedly to see...

NARRATOR

In that moment, amidst beating wings and smiling faces, Young Ned decided that new beginnings were a wonderful thing.

MS. MOSS

Would you like to see our latest class project?

Ms. Moss REVEALS a large, covered cage. Ned reacts, uneasy.

NARRATOR

And then he wasn't so sure...

MS. MOSS

We've been nursing some Red-Breasted Woodpecker chicks back to health, and today we're setting them free.

NARRATOR

As the once-dead Yellow Canaries had now been alive-again for over a minute, Young Ned knew that by the rules of his gift, something else nearby had to die.

Ms. Moss approaches the covered cage, as the children follow and gather 'round. Young Ned watches, growing nervous, starting to back quietly away...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Unaware of the class project, the boy had thought that whatever creatures traded their lives would be small, random and hidden in the woods.

ANGLE from behind the cage--

As the children look on in anticipation as Ms. Moss prepares to remove the small blanket that covers it...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Sadly, this was not the case...

She pulls off the blanket. As the kids' eyes go wide with shock--

EXT. NORTH THRUSH COUNTRY ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Young Ned, not looking pleased, and Digby walk back the way they came. We HEAR the distant sound of kids yelling and crying...

NARRATOR

As the boy and his dog returned from whence they came, Young Ned concluded that new beginnings only lead to painful ends.

EXT. LIBERTY APARTMENT BUILDING - PRESENT DAY

Establishing...

NARRATOR

It's 20 years later...

INT. NED'S APARTMENT - NED'S BEDROOM - DAY

Morning sunshine. Digby sleeps on the floor.

NARRATOR

...and the boy has become a Pie-Maker, who is in love.

We FIND NED, the grown-up version, lying in bed, eyes open...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

It's been 1 year, 22 weeks and 4 days since he touched his childhood sweetheart and brought her back to life.

He looks over and we REVEAL CHUCK'S EMPTY BED.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

And 2 days, 10 hours and 28 minutes since living-dead-girl Charlotte "Chuck" Charles moved across the hall.

He lies back down, staring at the ceiling.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Whilst Chuck had called it "apartment-sitting," the Pie-Maker sensed a new beginning beginning.

INT. LIBERTY APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY (TO BE SHOT)

Both doors open and CHUCK and Ned step out at the same time. Ned ready for work; Chuck in her kerchief and sunglasses.

NED

Morning. Sleep okay over there?

CHUCK

I woke up to the smell of someone cooking toast and eggs. It blew in through my sun-dappled curtains and I thought how lucky I am to be alive in a world with sun-dappled anything. I got so excited I was afraid my smile was going to vibrate the veneer off the cabinets.

NED

It was me, cooking the eggs and toast.

CHUCK

Thank you for that. And thank you for bringing me back to life. Not in that order at all. How did you sleep?

NARRATOR

The Pie-Maker had grown accustomed to the sound of her breathing, the smell of her skin and the feeling his heart made when it looked out his eyes and saw her sleeping in the next bed. He had not--

NED

Slept great.

CHUCK

Are you sure? 'Cause that smile wouldn't vibrate anything off anything.

As he forces a bigger smile...

NARRATOR

The Pie-Maker wondered if moving a little bit apart hadn't moved them a little bit apart.

They smile at each other, not sure what to do next...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

A little bit to the West...

INT. EMERSON'S OFFICE - DAY

PUSH IN ON EMERSON as he holds a cigar, phone to his ear as all the lines blink:

EMERSON

(pushing phone buttons)

Emerson Cod, please hold. Emerson Cod, please hold. Please hold.

NARRATOR

Well known for his uncanny ability to solve murders and apprehend suspects, less so for his silent partner who can wake the dead and ask who did it, Emerson Cod's business was booming.

He smiles at the busy phone, puffs and picks up his knitting, about to take a call--

GEORGEANN (O.S.)

Mr. Cod?

GEORGEANN HEAPS, mid-40s, cool, well-kept and collected, has entered...

GEORGEANN (CONT'D)

You the private investigator?

EMERSON

You know how to knock?

GEORGEANN

I did knock. I came in, said to myself, "I hope this good man can help me. Knock-wood." And then I knocked.

(knocks)

My name is Georgeann Heaps.

EMERSON

It's my nature to reward pushiness with inattention, Ms. Heaps. If you want to make an appointment--

GEORGEANN

For when? The tenth of never? I can see your phone blinking like a casino sign.

(then)

I'm pushy, Mr. Cod, not an idiot. My teenage daughter, Nikki, would disagree on that point if she were here. But she's not, because she's disappeared.

EMERSON

A missing persons case?

GEORGEANN

It's been three weeks since I saw her last. I'm desperate to find her.

(then)

Sorry, I'm not very good with emotion.

EMERSON

What emotion?

CONTINUED: (2)

GEORGEANN

All of them.

(then)

Police think my Nikki's just another runaway, so they won't look for her. But that's not who she is. She's always been sweet and helpful.

EMERSON

You ask her friends?

GEORGEANN

Even her best friend doesn't know where she went, and Nikki hates to be alone. A helping hand at my side. Ever since she was a little girl.

She stops...

GEORGEANN (CONT'D)

I don't mean to lose control like this.

Emerson watches her not lose control, then:

GEORGEANN (CONT'D)

Are you a parent or guardian, Emerson Cod?

NARRATOR

Unprepared for the question, the answer tried to hang onto the inside of his throat...

EMERSON

(mumbles)

Used to be.

Georgeann leans forward...

GEORGEANN

Did you say, "Used to be"?

EMERSON

I said I'll take the case.

NARRATOR

The words that choked in Emerson Cod's throat were that he, too, was the parent of a missing daughter. And she and Nikki Heaps were not the only missing persons that morning. There was another...

INT. PIE HOLE - FLASHBACK (SHOT IN EPISODE 201)

Olive has a meltdown...

NARRATOR

After falling apart in what had come to be called a "world-class tanty"...

INT. OLIVE'S APARTMENT - FLASHBACK (SHOT IN EPISODE 201)

Her STEAMER TRUNKS stacked up.

NARRATOR

...Olive Snook had packed all her worldly belongings and moved out of her apartment in the middle of the night.

EXT. PIE HOLE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK (SHOT IN EPISODE 201)

Lily and Olive drive away in the station wagon...

NARRATOR

And Aunt Lily, panicked that Olive, in her delicate state, might let slip some very big secrets, whisked Olive off to a nunnery in the country.

INT. NUNNERY - OLIVE SNOOK'S ROOM - DAY

OLIVE, in a nun's habit, sits on her bed.

NARRATOR

But not even Olive's new austere daily life of pretending to be a nun-in-training and pretending to be austere, could keep those secrets from spilling forth.

She's talking to someone, O.S.--

OLIVE

So, Chuck's mother isn't some woman who died in childbirth. In fact, she's not dead at all. Dying maybe, from all the drinking. But alive and pretending to be her Aunt Lily.

REVEAL she is unburdening to PIGBY, who listens--

OLIVE (CONT'D)

And Lily doesn't ever want her sister, Vivian, to find this out because Vivian was engaged to Chuck's father when she got pregnant. And he admitted to having an affair, but told Vivian it was with someone else. So Vivian called it off. And Lily came here to have baby Chuck in secret-- Are you even listening to me?

ON PIGBY, blankly piglike. Oink.

NARRATOR

Pigby enjoyed the warbling sounds that the nice-smelling thing-that-fed-him made.

CONTINUED:

OLIVE

Oh, Pigby, at least here, these secrets can't hurt anybody else. And maybe this is my chance to get away from all my troubles and start over. Maybe it's time to devote my life to a higher purpose.

MOTHER SUPERIOR steps into the doorway behind her...

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Sister Olive, it's time for middle-mid-morning prayers in the chapel.

Olive sighs, rolls her eyes and makes a "bluchhh" face to Pigby, then turns with a bright smile--

OLIVE

Coming, Mother Superior.

As Olive leaves...

NARRATOR

As Olive set off to make the best of her new life, she was sorely missed in the one she left behind...

EXT. PIE HOLE - DAY

Bustling.

INT. PIE HOLE - CONTINUOUS

The Pie Hole buzzes with CUSTOMERS. Chuck refills coffee at the booths. Ned, in his apron, turns 'round to look at the door every time the BELLS JINGLE.

EMERSON

The service here is terrible.

NED

There *is* no service. Service left in the middle of the night. Chuck's just filling in.

Chuck sits, pooped.

EMERSON

When is Employee of the Mouth coming back?

NED

Don't know.

CHUCK

(to Emerson)

You pretend you don't miss Olive, but you do. And I do, too. I wish I knew where she went.

Ned turns to watch the door again--

EMERSON

(to Ned)

Would you please quit looking at the door?

NED

Every time I hear the bells, I think Chuck's aunts are gonna walk in again.

CHUCK

I took care of Lily and Vivian for 20 years and they never left the house. What happened was incredibly unusual.

NED

Please take this the right way, but so is being dead-but-not-dead.

EMERSON

Amen.

NED

And while I might be shocked and amazed to see your aunts walk in here again, people who are dead-but-not-dead traditionally come up against angry mobs with pitchforks and torches.

Chuck puts on her sunglasses, adjusts her kerchief...

CHUCK

This better?

(then)

You *didn't* sleep well.

NED

It was deep and perfect, like a nap in the backseat of a car after a day at the beach.

EMERSON

Does anybody want to make any money?

He breaks the tension, opens a case folder--

EMERSON (CONT'D)

Sweet Nikki Heaps -- disappeared three weeks ago. Mother says she's a good girl, helpful and selfless -- not the kind of person you'd expect to run off. Thinks maybe she was tricked, abducted or cajoled away.

Ned flips to an 8x10 PICTURE of Nikki, an awkward, frizzy-haired, pimply-faced teenage girl. Chuck points to another girl in the picture, RANDI JEAN.

CONTINUED: (2)

CHUCK

Who's that behind her?

EMERSON

Randi Jean, her best friend. I already spoke with her and she doesn't know anything.

CHUCK

Lemme talk to Randi.

(then)

She's not going to tell a big P.I. the truth and rat out her friend.

SOME NIFTY TIME TRANSITION TO:

INT. PIE HOLE - BOOTH

A rebellious teenager, RANDI JEAN, 16, sits opposite Chuck.

RANDI JEAN

I'm not gonna tell you anything about Nikki, okay? I've made up my mind. And you should know my dad says my mind is like an old refrigerator in a deserted lot. If a secret's out there playing around and it climbs in -- it ain't never getting out, okay? So quit asking.

As Chuck opens the folder...

INT. PIE HOLE - COUNTER - CONTINUOUS

Emerson and Ned face away, sitting side-by-side at the counter. Emerson reads a folded paper next to his plate of pie.

EMERSON

That girl's not gonna tell her anything. We're gonna need some new leads, fast.

NED

Maybe the client's got more to tell.

EMERSON

It sounds silly when you say, "The client." Lingo doesn't suit you.

NED

I'm just saying, maybe Nikki's mother's hiding something. People don't run away for no reason.

EMERSON

Sure they do.

NED

You don't think it's curious that Olive left in the middle of the night? Because I'm curious. I'm very curious.

EMERSON

(still reading)
"Curious" is tighty-whitey for "angry." And you're not angry 'cause Olive left. You're angry 'cause Olive left and Dead Girl moved her ass into the empty apartment.

NED

You're wrong.

EMERSON

Person gets a little sip of a fresh start, they want to drink it from the hose. Today, an apartment across the hall; tomorrow, Paris and a croissant-maker named Phillipe.

NED

That's not who Chuck is.

EMERSON

A mistake, you did make.

NED

Yoda, you are not.

Chuck arrives as Randi Jean leaves in the b.g...

CHUCK

Nikki's living with her boyfriend in his van out on Airport Road. His name's Rocky.

NED

How'd you do it?

NARRATOR

The dead girl had improvised...

POP TO:

INT. PIE HOLE - BOOTH - FLASHBACK - MOMENTS BEFORE

As they eat pie...

CHUCK

Nikki's mother is worried.

RANDI JEAN

Hello. That was kind of the point. Maybe her mom won't be such a Medicated Pad next time Nikki wants to go out on a weeknight.

CHUCK

Where did she get the guts to run away from home?

RANDI JEAN

You think it took guts? Most people just think it was stupid.

CHUCK

I just moved out on my own and that's scary.

RANDI JEAN

Are you trying to find things in common so I'll lower my guard and tell you where Nikki is? 'Cause the "good cop" thing won't work.

CHUCK

I know. I hate when people do that "good cop" thing to me, too.

RANDI JEAN

Really?

CHUCK

Sometimes it makes me so mad I want to run away. Like Nikki.

RANDI JEAN

That's not why she ran away. She wants to be a big star, but her mom wouldn't take her seriously. Nikki's over being "Sweet Little Nikki," but her mom can't see.

(catches herself)

Shoot. I didn't want to tell you that.

CHUCK

I didn't want you to tell me either! Isn't that weird?

RANDI JEAN

We are so alike.

CHUCK

If we ran away together, do you think we'd end up where Nikki is?

RANDI JEAN

I wish. She moved in with a cute guy in a really tricked-out van. He's in entertainment.

CHUCK

Oh my gosh! That guy with the crazy van with the thing who does that entertainment. I know him!

RANDI JEAN

You know Rocky Boselli?

CONTINUED: (2)

Chuck smiles...

RANDI JEAN (CONT'D)

Shoot.

EXT. VAN - DAY (STAGE)

A big VAN by the side of the road. Ned knocks on the back--

NED

Nikki Heaps? Are you in there? Hello?

There's no answer. As Emerson opens the door, Chuck notices the sticker -- "Mimes do it with IMAGINATION."

CHUCK

"Mimes do it with imagination." That's cute.

Emerson's looking in. Ned recoils from the smell.

EMERSON

Thing should have said, "If the van's a-rockin', I'm being murdered."

INT. VAN - MOMENTS LATER

ROCKY BOSELLI, a mime in mime clothes, lies on the bed, a trickle of blood at the corner of his mouth. Chuck, Ned and Emerson, wearing kerchiefs over their mouths and noses, lean over.

EMERSON

Looks like he's been dead for about a week.

NED

(starts his watch)

Ready? One minute...

He TOUCHES Rocky, who opens his eyes and smiles, sitting up.

EMERSON

Are you Rocky?

Rocky nods and smiles. He's not speaking.

CHUCK

He really is a mime.

(to Rocky)

Hi, sweetie.

NED

Were you living with Nikki Heaps?

Rocky nods with a bittersweet smile, mimes taking out his own heart and breaking it in two.

CHUCK (O.S.)
She broke your heart?

NED
Did she kill you?

He shrugs (doesn't know). Then, he begins to mime the story: He woke up (stretch, yawn), then was putting on his makeup when he started choking--

EMERSON
Okay. That's enough.

Emerson points his gun. The mime instantly begins to speak--

ROCKY
I think someone poisoned my makeup. I don't know who.

CHUCK
Where's Nikki now?

ROCKY
She's with some clown.

A moment... Does he really mean...

CHUCK
A real clown?

ROCKY
("What else would it be?")
Yeah.

(then)
We met the jackass and all his jackass buddies at the disco. They were with the traveling circus. This one dude was telling her all these stories about their big, glamorous life on the road. Next day, she took off.

NED
"Took off"?

ROCKY
Yeah. Said she wanted a fresh start. That was the last I saw of her.

Ned and Emerson exchange a look...

CHUCK
I'm so sorry, Rocky.

EMERSON
This circus got a name?

ROCKY

"A Circus of Fun." I know, it sucks. They
can't have gotten that far.

(then)

Hey, if you find Nikki, would you mind giving
her this poem? She's a sweet girl.

Rocky hands Chuck a poem, written on the back of a flyer.

CHUCK

Sure. Would you mind doing the "glass box"?
I love that.

Rocky starts to mime the walls around him. Ned RE-DEADS him and
he slumps back down.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Hey.

EMERSON

(to Ned)

Thank you.

(then)

Looks like we gotta go to the circus.

Off a big top music STING--

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. PIE HOLE

Chuck, in disguise, works the counter.

CUSTOMER #1

Can I see a menu, please?

CHUCK

Sure. You can see one right over there. In the pile of menus.

CUSTOMER #1

What's with the attitude, lady?

NARRATOR

What was with the attitude, lady, was this:

INT. PIE HOLE - DAY - FLASHBACK (STAGE)

Emerson waits by the front door in the b.g. Chuck and Ned talk as CUSTOMERS enter and exit...

CHUCK

What do you mean, I can't come?

NED

Someone's got to run the Pie Hole with Olive gone.

CHUCK

How about the Pie-Maker?

NED

Emerson needs me.

CHUCK

Why? There's no dead body to wake up.

EMERSON

(re: nearby patrons)

Nice. Anyone not hear that?

CHUCK

Are you upset with me? Is this about something else?

NARRATOR

This was about something else.

NED

Nothing else. I promise I'll let you come next time.

CHUCK

Thanks for your permission.

NED

You don't need my permission.

CHUCK

Thanks for your permission not to need your permission.

EMERSON

It's a *traveling circus*. Not a wait-around-for-you-to-work-your-junk-out circus.

NED

I'll be back soon.

CHUCK

I'll be here forever.

She walks back toward the kitchen. Ned watches.

EMERSON

That was *curious*.

Emerson starts out, Ned hesitates before following...

NARRATOR

As the Pie-Maker wondered if Chuck moving out was making him passive or aggressive or both...

INT. NUNNERY - OLIVE'S ROOM - DAY

Olive sits in a shaft of sunlight, a contemplative smile.

NARRATOR

...Olive wondered when her new beginning would feel like it had begun.

OLIVE

That's it.

(a cleansing breath)

I am now more bored than I have ever been before.

Mother Superior leans in--

MOTHER SUPERIOR

It's time for late-mid-afternoon prayers, Sister Olive.

Olive turns before Mother Superior can leave--

OLIVE

Excuse me, Mother Superior. Does something ever happen where you think everything is kind of blah -- like blah brick walls, blah faux-Shaker furniture, blah Good Works and then, Shazam! All the little boring stuff is suddenly full of meaning?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Like an epiphany?

OLIVE

Bingo.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Not very often. It takes time to fill a life with meaning. Our days here are not easy, Sister Olive, but you will find that with hard work and personal sacrifice, you will strip away everything from your old life and start anew.

OLIVE

(forced excitement)

Grr--ate!

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Come along soon. Don't be late.

Mother Superior exits, passing another SISTER who hides her face as she enters. Olive barely notices, sighs...

OLIVE

You want a chapel-buddy, Sister?

The nun lowers her habit -- it's LILY.

OLIVE (CONT'D)

(hushed)

Lily? I thought you went home. When did you come back?

LILY

(leaving again)

I can't be seen. Meet me in the chapel tonight.

OLIVE

When?

LILY

Early mid-middle-night prayer.

And Lily's off again...

EXT. CIRCUS ENTRANCE

A big balloon archway that marks the entrance to the small, traveling circus -- think FELLINI. A big tent (big enough for one ring), and a small midway with a ticket booth, several game stands and a trailer office.

Ned and Emerson get out of Emerson's car...

EMERSON

(looking around)

This ain't a circus. A circus should smell like popcorn and cotton candy. Not wet sawdust and underarm. This is a freak show.

Ned and Emerson start to walk, passing SEVERAL JUGGLERS in MASKS, A BEARDED LADY and a TATTOO-COVERED MAN...

NED

Why would sweet Nikki Heaps run away here?

They have come to the OFFICE TRAILER, flanked on either side by an AERIALIST REHEARSAL SCAFFOLD. SEVERAL costumed AERIALISTS practice in the b.g.

EMERSON

People decide to leave and start over, a switch flips, a fuse blows and everything's gotta change. You can't have half a revolution.

(off Ned)

And don't look at me with those psychobabbly eyes, like this case is personal to me.

NED

No eyes. Just looking.

(then)

If you want to talk--

As Emerson turns to respond to Ned, there is a WHOOSHING sound. PIERRE, a French-Canadian acrobat in costume, holding a cigarette, drops down in front of them, upside-down. Emerson and Ned YELL, surprised...

PIERRE

You're not allowed back here. We don't allow any *stubs* snooping around.

NED

"Stubs"?

PIERRE

There are two kinds of people in the world. Those that take risks and make you feel something besides the dull thudding of your own heart. And those that pay to watch.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PIERRE (CONT'D)

(maybe he needs more...)

With a ticket *stub* in their pock--

NED

I got it.

EMERSON

We're investigating the disappearance of a young girl and the murder of her boyfriend.

PIERRE

(shrugs)

Sorry. I can't help you.

EMERSON

You ever seen the separate police lockup for cocky acrobats? 'Cause I haven't.

PIERRE

I am upside-down, my friend. Not foolish.

NED

The girl was last seen with the clowns.

PIERRE

Talk to Mr. Arno in the office trailer. He's in charge of the Circus of Fun.

NED

Thank you.

PIERRE

But you should know, there's two things clowns make around here: Balloon animals, and enemies.

With that, he ascends back UP, OUT OF FRAME. Ned and Emerson proceed up the stairs to--

INT. ARNO'S OFFICE TRAILER

Emerson and Ned sit across from ARNO, 50s, gruff circus lifer, looking at the open case folder and the picture of Nikki...

ARNO

I don't know her, but we got lots of people passing through. Hard to keep track of everybody.

EMERSON

The girl we're looking for was hitching a ride with a mime who ended up dead.

ARNO

Guess that's one box he won't get out of.

Arno's Kathy Lee-esque ASSISTANT SNORT-GIGGLES from her desk in the corner.

ARNO (CONT'D)

The clowns haze the newbies pretty bad. If she didn't quit, she was probably assigned to apprentice one of 'em.

NED

Where can we find these clowns?

ARNO

Drunk in a ditch would be my guess. They usually stumble in just before showtime. And they always travel in a pack.

NED

Like wolves?

ARNO

More like cigarettes.

More SNORT-GIGGLES from his assistant.

EMERSON

Thanks for your help.

ARNO

I'm sorry I don't remember the girl.

Another SNORT-GIGGLE, and we--

EXT. ARNO'S OFFICE TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

NED

Did you notice his secretary snort-giggled whenever he made a joke?

EMERSON

Yeah, but then she also snort-giggled--

NED

--when he said he didn't remember her. 'Could have been a nervous snort-giggle--

EMERSON

'Cause she knew he was lying. She's worth a second look.

Behind them, Arno exits the trailer and walks away.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

I'll go.

NED

Let me.

Ned runs toward the office trailer as a SMALL PERSON in a BRIGHT HELMET passes, pulling a LARGE CANNON (big enough to shoot him) on wheels.

SMALL PERSON

(loaded)

NINETY-EIGHT BOTTLES OF BEER ON THE WALL,
NINETY-EIGHT BOTTLES OF BEER. TAKE ONE DOWN,
PASS IT AROUND, NINETY... THREE BOTTLES OF
BEER ON THE WALL...

INT. OFFICE TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Ned enters again--

NED

Did I leave my keys in here, Ms...?

MS. DE JONG

De Jong. No, I don't think you did.

Ned nods, turns away, then turns back à la *Columbo*.

NED

Ms. De Jong, one more thing--

MS. DE JONG

Besides the keys?

NED

Yes.

MS. DE JONG

Because those weren't really a thing. More of an excuse to walk to the door and then turn back with your real question which is coming right up.

NED

Is it possible your boss knew something he didn't want to tell us about the missing girl?

MS. DE JONG

No.

NED

Is it possible *you* knew something?

She SIGH-SNORTS, nods...

NED (CONT'D)

Why didn't you just tell us?

MS. DE JONG
I didn't like that girl. Nobody who met her did.

NED
Really? But she was Sweet Nikki.

MS. DE JONG
Not around here, she wasn't. I say she
deserves what she gets now.

NED
(nods, then)
What does she get now?

MS. DE JONG
What she deserves.

Before she answers--

EXT. OFFICE TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

As Ned walks out to Emerson...

NARRATOR
*The Pie-Maker had gotten the information he
needed. But not the information he wanted.*

Ned reaches Emerson and they walk back toward the car.

NED
Nikki was apprenticed to the head clown, named
Jackie Johnny, who in her words is a "real
lousy, low-down"--

THREE FIRE JUGGLERS on unicycles cross between Ned and CAMERA,
preventing us from hearing the end of his sentence. Then:

EMERSON
Never heard you say those words.

NED
I'm just repeating them. Nikki left with
Jackie after the show last night and no one's
seen them since.

EMERSON
Then we gotta find this Jackie Johnny, and
fast.

As a pair of LEGS (THE TALL MAN) cross FRAME, we--

INT. PIE HOLE - DINING AREA - DAY

Chuck is putting chairs up on tables, closing up.

NARRATOR

In less than 16 seconds, the dead girl who was not dead would be involved in the smallest of "ironic coincidences."

She pauses, thinking, then continues the work...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

For just as she said to herself:

CHUCK

I wish I were where the action were at...

NARRATOR

She was where it were at.

She hears the BELLS JINGLE...

CHUCK

We're closing early today.

VIVIAN

Has entered.

NARRATOR

Her Aunt Vivian, who would have dropped dead from shock at seeing her niece alive-again, arrived again.

Vivian drops her parasol and so does not see--

CHUCK

Panic and VAULT over the counter...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. PIE HOLE - KITCHEN

Vivian enters the dining area, closing her parasol, as Chuck sees...

NARRATOR

Upon seeing her Aunt Vivian return to the Pie Hole, it was not just Chuck's heart that leapt...

Chuck leaps the counter, tumbling down behind and crawling to the kitchen (**THIS HAS BEEN SHOT ALREADY** - repeat the end of Act Two).

VIVIAN

Hello...? I am an acquaintance of the Pie-Maker.

Chuck knocks over some pans, which tumble with a CRASH...

VIVIAN

Assumes someone has gone in back.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

My sister left again on an overnight trip without explanation. The emptiness at our house was like a ringing Chinese gong which only pie can muffle. A triple-berry, to go, if it's not that much trouble.

CHUCK

Tries to breathe, shake off the shock...

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

You must be new here.

CHUCK

(disguising her voice)

Um-hm.

Chuck starts to box a pie...

VIVIAN

Our friend, Olive, used to deliver them to our house. Always lifted the spirits, like the news story they put in after the murders and carjacks to make you feel better. Has anyone heard from Olive yet?

CHUCK

Uh-uh.

VIVIAN

I suppose not.

(then)

Quiet here without her.

Vivian quietly improvises a little lullaby to herself as she waits:

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

(to "ROCK-A-BYE BABY")

ROCK-A-BYE PIE-MAKER / BAKE ME A PIE. / WHEN
THE CRUST RISES / SET IT UP HIGH / OUT WILL
COME PEOPLE / INTO THE STREET / LEAD BY THEIR
NOSES / READY TO EAT...

NARRATOR

*For many months, Chuck had made her aunts the
pies Olive had delivered, secretly adding
homeopathic antidepressants to aid them with
their grief.*

CHUCK

Out of sight in the kitchen, crying quietly as she listens...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*But for now, the only mood-altering
ingredients in this particular pie were the
endorphins in Chuck's tears.*

Vivian turns around. The PIE BOX is now right in front of her.

VIVIAN

Oh. Didn't see it arrive. Should I leave the
money?

No response. She does.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Thank you. You've been a very kind listener.

Vivian exits with her pie box, JINGLING the bells on her way
out...

EXT. COUNTRY DIRT ROAD - DAY

Emerson's car passes...

INT. EMERSON'S CAR - CONTINUOUS (TO BE SHOT)

Emerson drives, Ned rides, checks a map.

CONTINUED:

NED

If Ms. De Jong is right, and this was the road she saw Jackie Johnny and Nikki take when they left, then they probably weren't running away.

(off Emerson)

It dead-ends in a mile.

EMERSON

I don't like this road. Got a kick-the-window-out-and-run-'cause-they're-gonna-cap-your-ass feeling to it.

Ned senses his unease...

NED

You okay?

EMERSON

I just want to find this girl and be done with this case.

Ned clocks this. A moment, then:

NED

I know you think I made Chuck stay behind because I'm upset she moved out. But I'm not.

EMERSON

I know. You're upset she's *not* upset she moved out.

He's right, Ned sighs...

NED

I want to be happy, too, but I miss her.

(then)

It's hard enough to be in a relationship where we can't touch. But we improvise, we've figured out ways around that -- I've even built contraptions...

Emerson turns to Ned--

EMERSON

Do you understand how a head works? When you say something, I have to think it. You say, "Monkey in a bellhop suit driving a car," I think, "Monkey in a bellhop suit driving a car." Don't tell me what you do together.

NED

There's a weird clown mask.

EMERSON

Now I am begging you to stop.

CONTINUED: (2)

NED

No. There was a weird clown mask back there
in the bushes.

OMIT

EXT. POND - DAY

Ned and Emerson come through a hole in the bushes.

EMERSON

Skid marks back there. Car drove off the
road here.

Ned quickly moves on ahead toward the pond...

NED

Emerson...

BY THE WATER

A CLOWN WIG floats on the surface of the water. Emerson steps
up to Ned.

EMERSON

What do you want to bet that's Jackie Johnny's
clown wig?

NED

Poor Nikki...

EXT. POND - LATER

A TOW TRUCK pulls a brightly-painted CLOWN CAR, with fogged-out
windows, out of the pond and onto the shore. A POLICE CAR and
the CORONER'S VAN are parked nearby. Several POLICE OFFICERS
watch.

Emerson and Ned also watch as THE CORONER opens the door. Water
spills out.

CORONER

I got a male driver, 30s, in a clown costume.

"CORONER"-jacketed ATTENDANTS load the body onto the stretcher,
they pass by--

ON NED AND EMERSON

EMERSON

Gotta be Jackie Johnny.

CORONER

I got another male passenger, clown costume.

Another body is carried past them on a stretcher.

NED

It's not Nikki. Thank goodness.

EMERSON

But now we got a missing girl, a dead mime and two dead clowns--

CORONER (O.S.)

Another one.

EMERSON

A dead mime and three dead--

CORONER (O.S.)

Bealzebeeb. There's a *whole bunch* more in back.

A succession of CLOWN BODIES are carried past Emerson and Ned...

OMIT

INT. EMERSON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Emerson, behind his desk, speaks with Georgeann.

EMERSON

The good news is your daughter wasn't one of the... many bodies recovered from the car.

GEORGEANN

It seems like you are no closer to finding my sweet Nikki.

EMERSON

We're doing everything we can, Ms. Heaps. The tragic death of all the circus clowns was an unexpected development.

GEORGEANN

You need to find her, Mr. Cod. I don't wear my feelings like a shiny, sparkley broach, but if I did, my sadness and anxiety would be mesmerizing right now.

EMERSON

I do feel we are making progress. We know that Nikki was seen leaving last night with Jackie Johnny, one of the unfortunate clowns in the car.

GEORGEANN

What's your plan? To bring him back to life and ask him where she is?

Emerson freezes.

GEORGEANN (CONT'D)

(flatly)
That was a joke.

INT. MORGUE - LAB - NIGHT

Chuck and Ned look around at the clowns laid out on every spare gurney, wall-to-wall.

CHUCK

Let's bring him back to life and ask him where she is. Which one is Jackie Johnny?

As they check TOE TAGS...

NED

Thanks for meeting me here. I'm sorry I asked you to stay at the Pie Hole.

CHUCK

It was very pleasant, actually. Quiet all day.

NARRATOR

Chuck thought it best not to discuss the near miss with her Aunt Vivian...

NED

From now on, until Olive comes back or we hire a new waitress, I'm closing the Pie Hole when we have a case.

CHUCK

You can't close the Pie Hole. People depend on it.

NED

People can learn to live without it for a few hours at a time.

CHUCK

Not all of them.

This catches his attention. He stares at her, she breaks--

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Vivian stopped by. She never saw me. And then she left.

NED

I told you they'd come back.

CHUCK

And you were right. But I took care of myself. I can do that, you know.

NED

I've noticed that. From where I live. Across the hall.

CHUCK

Is that what this is about?

Ned turns, reads the TOE TAG and TOUCHES Jackie Johnny, who sits up, coughs up water...

NED

Jackie Johnny?

JACKIE JOHNNY

Hey. You got a smoke?

NED

No.

CHUCK

You told me you were okay with me moving out.

Jackie Johnny clocks this--

JACKIE JOHNNY

Looks like you might need one.

NED

Moving across the hall is fine with me. It's Paris and the revolution I'm worried about.

CHUCK

("Huh?")

What?

JACKIE JOHNNY

(starts to go)

If you guys need a minute...

NED

(realizes, checks watch)

Sonofabitch, a minute... Can we talk about this later?

CHUCK

Fine.

NED

(to Jackie Johnny)

Mr. Johnny, we're trying to find Nikki Heaps. She was seen leaving the big top with you after the show, but she wasn't with you in the car when we pulled you out of the pond.

CONTINUED: (2)

JACKIE JOHNNY

We walked out together, but then I told her she had to go back and clean up the mess.

CHUCK

What mess?

JACKIE JOHNNY

We had a little fun with a volunteer from the audience. Maybe a little too much fun. Nikki is lowest on the totem pole, so I sent her back to calm him down and hose him off.

NED

What did you do to him?

JACKIE JOHNNY

Let's just say it involved Peppers the Horse and a pound and a half of chocolate-flavored diuretic.

(off Ned and Chuck)

Off-putting now, hilarious in the moment.

NED

And after the show, when you and your buddies drove away...?

JACKIE JOHNNY

We were run off the road by another car. That guy from the audience did threaten to kill us.

CHUCK

Do you remember his name?

JACKIE JOHNNY

Yeah. Bryce Von Deenis. I remember 'cause we made up a limerick and had the whole audience sing it to him.

Ned RE-DEADS Jackie Johnny, who slumps back.

NED

So, Von Deenis was the last person to be seen with Nikki. And he may also have driven fifteen clowns off the road to their death.

CHUCK

(as a limerick)

There once was a man named Von Deenis...

NED

Who they said had a very big mean-ness.

OFF this...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY (LIBERTY REDRESS) - NIGHT

Emerson puts a folded-up piece of paper in an envelope, seals it and slips it under an apartment door marked: "Von Deenis."

NARRATOR

As the Private Investigator laid a trap for the last person to be seen with missing girl, Sweet Nikki Heaps...

INT. NUNNERY - CHAPEL - NIGHT

Olive enters, moves to the front row and kneels next to another nun. It's Lily. They speak in hushed tones.

NARRATOR

...Lily returned to the nunnery to make a confession.

LILY

Everything I told you is a lie.

OLIVE

Get out. You're not Chuck's mother?

LILY

Okay, that part's true. Charlotte is my daughter. But I never slept with Charles Charles. He was my sister's fiancé and I would never have done that.

OLIVE

But Charlotte thinks that Charles Charles was her real dad.

LILY

And so did he, because I told him he was. I tricked him into raising Chuck as his own. Happens all the time.

OLIVE

But you said you never slept with him.

LILY

I didn't. Because I would never do that.

OLIVE

So why would he believe you when you told him Chuck was his daughter?

A pause, and Lily realizes her logic has holes...

CONTINUED:

LILY

Dammit.

(then)

Dammit. Dammit. Dammit. Dammit.

OLIVE

It's not a lie, is it? You're just trying to take it back. You did sleep with Vivian's fiancé, Charles Charles, and then you had Chuck.

Lily takes a leather-bound volume from her frock and opens it to REVEAL a cutout hideaway for a silver flask. She takes a big swig from the flask.

OLIVE (CONT'D)

You hide booze in your Bible?

LILY

Ever since I told you what I did, it's like the secret's this elephant in our parlor again. I can't even look Vivian in the eye. I was going to wait to tell her till one of us was on our deathbed, but that'll be for friggin' ever...

A NUN who has entered SHUSHES them. Olive glares back at her, then contemplates in holy silence...

NARRATOR

As Olive considered how the secrets she and Aunt Lily were keeping were holding them back...

OMIT

INT. PIE HOLE - DINING AREA - MORNING

A few PATRONS, Ned enters from the kitchen, Chuck mans the register...

NARRATOR

...the Pie-Maker tried to explain his fear of letting go.

NED

How'd you sleep?

CHUCK

I'm afraid to answer that.

NED

What if this is all too fast? There are real risks to being on your own. If people find out about you -- if your aunts are coming to the Pie Hole now--

CHUCK

Why are they coming to the Pie Hole? Why is Aunt Lily away on an overnight trip? I know that's not who they are, but apparently it is who they are, so I don't know who they are.

NED

Who they were was brokenhearted and in mourning... Which may be changing.

CHUCK

So *they're* allowed to move on and start over, but you don't want me to move across the hall?

He doesn't have an answer. A middle-aged balding man, BRYCE VON DEENIS, enters, approaches with a COUPON in hand.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Let's just worry about finding Nikki, okay? I don't want to talk about it anymore.

BRYCE

Excuse me, I got this coupon for a dozen free pies from the Pie Hole?

CHUCK

Congratulations. Have a seat.

Bryce takes a seat at the counter. Emerson arrives and sits next to Bryce. Ned and Chuck join him, either side.

EMERSON

You win some pies, Mr. Von Deenis?

BRYCE

How do you know my name?

NED

Everybody knows it. This is one of those places.

EMERSON

We're looking for a missing girl. You met her at the circus the other night.

CHUCK

Teenager named Nikki, a clown-in-training. You're the last person she was seen with before she disappeared.

BRYCE

I remember her. She was all upset that the other clowns made her stay and clean me up. Said she didn't join the circus to do the crap jobs and I said I didn't come to the circus to be the crap job.

CONTINUED: (2)

NED

There's witnesses say you threatened the clowns' lives.

BRYCE

They tied me up, stripped me down to my underwear, then led me out to the center of the ring and half the audience threw chocolate pies at me while they sang an oh-so-clever rhyming song about my name. Ha-ha. So I think I'm done, but they say I need a shower first. But there wasn't a shower, just some horse named Peppers.

NED

Oh my god.

EMERSON

Someone did that to me, I'd want to kill them twice.

BRYCE

And I couldn't see it coming 'cause they made me put on a clown mask.

Ned and Emerson exchange a look.

CHUCK

So when Nikki came back, you grabbed her, followed the other clowns and ran them into the pond.

NED

And when you got out to see what happened, you dropped your mask in the bushes. Right where we found it.

EMERSON

Where's Nikki, Von Deenis?

BRYCE

I dunno. I never followed those jerks anywhere. Nikki did.

NED

Nikki?

BRYCE

I gave her the mask back and she took another clown car and drove after them to catch up.

EMERSON

And you can prove it wasn't you that went after them?

CONTINUED: (3)

BRYCE

My kids wouldn't even get in the car with me.
We played games in the midway until my clothes
dried off.

NARRATOR

As the trail of Nikki Heaps seemed to go cold...

OMIT

INT. NED'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Ned lies on the couch--

NARRATOR

*...the Pie-Maker returned to his apartment and
pondered what the temperature of his
relationship with the girl across the hall was.*

KNOCK-KNOCK. Ned BOUNCES back up, gets to the door in three
leaps:

NED

Chuck...?

He throws it open--

Emerson is there.

EMERSON

I talked with the ringtoss guy. He confirmed
that Von Deenis didn't leave the circus until
after the clowns would have gone into the
pond, so he didn't do it.

NED

It's really late...

EMERSON

I couldn't go home. I'm worried about Nikki.
You got any tea?

INT. NED'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Ned and Emerson, on the couch. They drink tea.

NED

If Bryce was telling the truth about Nikki and
she was the one who went after them, then that
puts Nikki at the scene of the murders. And
he said she was angry.

EMERSON

I don't think Nikki ran those clowns off the
road. It's not who she is.

NED

I dunno. I think you're right about people. They decide they want a fresh start and everything about them ends up changing.

EMERSON

Didn't come here to talk about Dead Girl.

NED

Why the change of heart about Nikki?

EMERSON

Guess my glass is half-full on this one.

NED

Generally speaking, I would say you don't even have a glass. You just have that wet ring on the coffee table where the glass used to be.

EMERSON

This is a lost little girl. Maybe she is a pissant pain in the ass. But I don't believe she's a murderer.

They sit quietly a moment on the couch with their teacups...

NED

Why'd you take this case?

EMERSON

Nikki's mother asked me if I knew what it was like to lose a daughter.

NARRATOR

The Pie-Maker knew he did.

NED

Did... did your daughter run away?

EMERSON

Wife ran away. Took her with. Seven years ago.

NED

Does anyone--

EMERSON

No one knows.

NED

I know.

EMERSON

Wish you didn't.

(stands)

I gotta go.

CONTINUED: (2)

NED

Would you still recognize her?

EMERSON

She was a stubborn kid. I'd recognize that.

NED

At least some things don't change.

Emerson stops, thinks, smiles...

NED (CONT'D)

Why are you smiling? This is all very weepy stuff.

EMERSON

Nikki's mother said the thing Nikki hated the most was being alone. She left home with the mime, then she went right to the clowns. I'll bet she never left the circus. I'll bet she's too scared to go very far.

NED

How can you be sure?

EMERSON

(as he leaves)

Wishful thinking.

(then)

I'm gonna find this girl.

OFF this...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

EXT. CIRCUS ENTRANCE - EARLY MORNING

Emerson, Ned and Chuck walk from the car--

EMERSON

We'll split up. You two check the midway,
I'll go back around the big top.

CHUCK

What if we can't find her?

EMERSON

Then I'm wrong about her and we're back to
square one.

NARRATOR

*As the private investigators set out once
again to hunt for the missing girl...*

INT. NUNNERY - OLIVE'S ROOM - MORNING

Olive and Lily sit together and eat porridge out of bowls.
Pigby watches.

NARRATOR

*...Olive and Lily ate the morning porridge and
wondered if the truffle-hunting pig might be
retrained to hunt for a packet of sugar.*

LILY

I'd forgotten how much I hated morning
porridge when I was here.

OLIVE

(mouth full)

I could throw up in my mouth right now and not
know the difference.

LILY

I think you're right about staying here. The
food's not great. And there's a lot of praying--

OLIVE

A lot of praying.

LILY

But I don't think I can go home.

(then)

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

LILY (CONT'D)

This is a terrible thing to say, but I thought that when Charlotte died, my guilt about what I did to Vivian might die, too. But it didn't, it lived on.

NARRATOR

It was then that Olive realized she would now have to keep an even bigger secret from Lily -- that Chuck was still alive...

Olive swallows. Proceeds cautiously:

OLIVE

Maybe there's some sort of cosmic reason it didn't die. Your guilt. Not Charlotte. Of course.

LILY

I can't seem to put it behind me. Truth is, I haven't really put Charlotte behind me either.

NARRATOR

Suddenly, without warning, Olive Snook had a tiny, yet very real epiphany:

OLIVE

Maybe you shouldn't put Charlotte behind you. Maybe you should put her in front of you.

(then)

Metaphorically. Don't completely let her go yet. Cling a little.

LILY

What about a fresh start?

OLIVE

Too soon. You need to go home. Your sister needs you. She lost her niece. She can't lose you, too.

LILY

I'll have to tell Vivian what I did. She'll never forgive me.

OLIVE

So don't tell her. I keep secrets like moths in a mesh bag, but you're like an Olympic-class secret-keeper. So you made a little slip with me. Doesn't mean you can't shove it back down inside and forget it's there.

LILY

But I can't make you stay in this place.

CONTINUED: (2)

OLIVE

I came here to keep your secret, Lily. But I'm staying for one of my own. One I can never, ever tell you.

LILY

Tell me.

OLIVE

(without pause)

I still love the Pie-Maker and he loves someone else.

(then)

Damn it.

(then)

This may be the only place I can get over that.

Off this--

OMIT

EXT. CIRCUS - MIDWAY - DAY

Chuck and Ned come upon the empty (no attendants) midway games, WHISPER-CALLING for...

NED

Nikki?

CHUCK

Nikki?

NED

Can I just say I know you can take care of yourself. When you moved out, I panicked because I thought everything was changing.

CHUCK

Everything is changing.

Ned stops.

NED

Way to ruin a good apology.

CHUCK

What is so terrible about starting fresh?

NED

Because "starting fresh" means something else's ending stale.

(then)

You're Chuck, who I destroyed Play-Doh cities with. Chuck, my best friend, my first kiss. I don't want that to change.

CHUCK

But I'm also Chuck who went on a pleasure cruise and got a plastic bag put over her head.

NED

That's not as much fun to remember.

CHUCK

But it happened. And when it was happening, I was thinking-- Well, actually I was thinking, "Sonofabitch, why'd I need to leave my cabin to get ice for my ginger ale." But I also thought, "I finally get to live my own life and it's already over." And then you gave me another chance.

NED

So, it's my fault.

CHUCK

My first time around, I was afraid of change. I'm not making that mistake again. I can't.

NED

But how can you start over with someone who only knows who you were before? How do we make it work? I knew the caterpillar, but maybe you need to become a butterfly.

EMERSON (O.S.)

You did not just say that.

NED

Did not know you were there.

Emerson has arrived...

EMERSON

Truckload of mimes just pulled up and they're not talking.

A pause.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

I mean they can talk, but they won't say anything besides they've heard about jobs opening up at the circus.

NED

Word must have spread about the clowns needing to be replaced.

CHUCK

Wait a minute.

Chuck pulls out the folded-up poem the mime gave her earlier.

EMERSON

The poem?

CHUCK

Rocky was looking for a job, too. He wrote the poem on the back of a flyer.

(reads)

"Mimes, jugglers, are invited to fill positions available immediately." There's no name, but look, it's the same phone number.

Ned looks between the flyer and the sign on the TICKET BOOTH--

NED

But we found Rocky three days ago.

CHUCK

Before the clowns disappeared. How would the circus management know to replace the clowns before anyone knew they were dead?

EMERSON

Unless someone knew they were *gonna* be dead.

NED

Mr. Arno.

INT. ARNO'S OFFICE TRAILER - DAY

Emerson, Chuck and Ned sit across from Arno, at his desk.

ARNO

It was a union dispute.

EMERSON

Union?

ARNO

The clowns would pretend to go drinking, but I knew they were having secret meetings, trying to organize. They wanted health care, more money. I was gonna fire 'em, not kill 'em.

EMERSON

How'd you know about these secret meetings?

ARNO

Nikki was my spy on the inside. The other clowns had no idea. She left here to follow them to a meeting the night they got run into the lake. I swear that was the last time I saw her.

NED
Why didn't you tell us?

ARNO
I knew I'd look guilty. When she disappeared and you all came looking for her, I got scared I'd get put away.

CHUCK
Why'd Nikki want to be your spy?

ARNO
Said everyone thought she was a wallflower, so she was gonna start over and be a star. She didn't like having to pay her dues with the clowns, so we made a deal.

NED
She'd spy on the clowns' union activities--

CHUCK
And in return, you were gonna put her in the show.

ARNO
She said she'd do anything not to go back to who she was. I just didn't think she was capable of murder.

A distant BOOM. From outside.

CHUCK
What was that?

Emerson turns to the window--

EMERSON
Get down!

The HELMETED LITTLE MAN crashes through THE WALL, SMASHING INTO the back. All settles and the LITTLE MAN hiccups...

NED
I think that human cannonball was meant for us.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

FADE IN:

EXT. ARNO'S OFFICE TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Emerson, Chuck and Ned BURST OUT of the trailer.

NARRATOR

*Well aware that the range of a human cannonball
is less than the diameter of a low-rent
traveling circus...*

NED

There!

DOWN THE WAY

A shadowy FIGURE rounds the corner, running away.

NARRATOR

*...the Private Investigator felt he was
closing in on the answers to the mystery.*

CHUCK

Was that Nikki? Did she shoot at us?

EMERSON

No, but I think I know who did. And if Nikki is
still here, we better find her before they do.

As they run off. HOLD A MOMENT on the TRAILER. THEN, the
LITTLE MAN in the helmet stumbles out the door, unsteady,
COUGHING PUFFS OF SMOKE.

EXT. CIRCUS BACKSTAGE AREA

DESERTED. Emerson waves for them to be quiet as they walk.
There is a strange, faint CRYING and SNIFFLING sound...

EMERSON

Hey... listen...

A STUFFED, CYMBAL-CLAPPING MONKEY on an old crate bangs away.

Chuck spies a door to a TENT behind it. It's marked: "PRIZE
STORAGE."

CHUCK

Look...

She leads, and they cautiously enter...

INT. PRIZE STORAGE TENT

It is FULL OF ALL SIZES and TYPES OF STUFFED-ANIMAL PRIZES.
They WHISPER...

CHUCK / NED

Wow...

EMERSON

Nikki? I know you're in here.

As Emerson talks, they scan the tent for any kind of movement...

EMERSON (CONT'D)

I don't think you shot at us. In fact,
there's a lot of stuff I don't think you did.

(then)

We know you were spying on the clowns. And we
know you saw them drive into the pond, 'cause
we found the mask that Bryce gave back to you.

(then)

But you didn't drive them off the road. And you
saw who did and now you're scared. Am I right?

A moment, then:

ANGLE - A CORNER

A five-foot-tall KING KONG prize begins to move. It lifts off
its head to REVEAL NIKKI HEAPS, looking very small and scared.

NIKKI

You're right...

EXT. ARNO'S OFFICE TRAILER

Emerson holds King Kong's hand (mask off) as they all walk back
toward the office...

NED

Why did you stay here at the circus?

NIKKI

I was too scared to leave. And I couldn't go
home. My mom's gonna kill me.

NED

But didn't you know we were looking for you?

NIKKI

Yeah, but I figured you thought that I'd run
the clowns off the road, so I hid.

CHUCK

I don't understand. The only other person you told about the clowns' secret meeting that night was Mr. Arno, but he didn't kill the clowns.

NED

How would anyone else have known?

EMERSON

Arno was the only person Nikki told. But he wasn't the only person who was *listening*.

IN A FLASH, BEFORE ANYONE CAN NOTICE, NIKKI is PLUCKED FROM ABOVE, DISAPPEARING UP OUT OF FRAME IN A WHOOSH.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

Am I right, Nikki?

Now they notice she's not there...

EMERSON (CONT'D)

Nikki?

NARRATOR

The facts were these:

EXT. ARNO'S OFFICE TRAILER - DAY - FLASHBACK

Nikki knocks on the door. Arno opens it, looks around, then escorts Nikki in, shutting the door behind them.

NARRATOR

Good girl turned bad girl turned scared girl, Nikki Heaps, had come to snitch. Reporting to Management that the clowns were planning their secret meeting, she was sent back out to spy, certain her secret was safe.

A moment, then PIERRE DROPS DOWN INTO FRAME, FROM ABOVE, on his bungee cord. He hangs motionless, inches above the roof, listening.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

But someone else was spying on her. Wanting to keep the budding clown union from blooming, the acrobat leapt.

And ZIP, he retracts back up out of frame, just as the office door opens and Nikki steps out.

EXT. CIRCUS ENTRANCE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

The clowns drive off, out the gate, into the darkness.

NARRATOR

The clowns drove off to meet secretly in the woods, hoping to officially form their union and plan their stand against Circus Management...

EXT. CIRCUS - BIG TOP - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Nikki hoses off Bryce. He gives her back the mask.

NARRATOR

...leaving Nikki behind on clean-up duty.

EXT. CIRCUS ENTRANCE - FLASHBACK

An old STATION WAGON, with PIERRE at the wheel, tears off into the darkness after the clowns...

NARRATOR

The acrobat followed the clowns into the darkness...

Another clown car (Nikki) drives off down the same road...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...unaware that the left-behind Nikki was done with her duty and was quickly catching up.

As her car disappears into the trees:

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The acrobat would make sure that the only Labor movement that night was a sudden movement off the road and into cold, murky water.

In the distance, we HEAR a CRASH and see a FLASH of light in the dense trees.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

And, as he would catch sight of Young Nikki witnessing his terrible clownicide...

BACK TO SCENE

Chuck, Ned and Emerson look around for Nikki--

NARRATOR

...the snitch would need to be snatched.

Chuck sees first:

CHUCK

Look!

They do--

CONTINUED:

ANGLE ON THE AERIALIST TOWER

Pierre climbs the tower, holding little Nikki in her KING KONG suit.

NED

That's backward...

They reach the top and Pierre brandishes a gun. Nikki SCREAMS!

PIERRE

The union would have put us all out of business. Who ever heard of a circus with a fair-and-safe workplace? I only wished to scare the clowns.

EMERSON

What about Rocky, the mime? Were you trying to scare him, too?

PIERRE

I wanted it to look like the clowns did it, to scare off the mimes from taking their jobs. You see? I just wanted everything to stay the same. Is that so terrible?

(then)

My demands are simple:

Chuck steps forward.

CHUCK

Wait! Nikki, Rocky wrote you a poem.

NIKKI

He did? He was so nice.

Chuck takes out the flyer, turns it over...

CHUCK

"No matter where you go, or what you do, you'll always be my Sweet Nikki Heaps."

Nikki smiles.

NIKKI

Thank you.

NED

(quietly)

Does it really say that?

CHUCK

That was the gist. His was kinda wordy.

PIERRE

First, in return for the girl's life, we
require safe passage across the border.

EMERSON

Toss me that, will you?

He indicates a basket of softballs from the ball toss.

NED

Let me.

Chuck tosses Ned the ball. He throws it.

PIERRE

Secondly--

PIERRE is BEANED in the head. He passes out, dropping Nikki,
who LANDS safely on the NET. Ned smiles at Chuck...

CHUCK

You won me a prize.

Emerson goes to Nikki...

EXT. PIE HOLE - DAY

Open for business...

INT. PIE HOLE

PULL BACK from CHUCK AND NED to find them looking out together
from the kitchen, as the Pie Hole bustles...

NARRATOR

*With the case of missing persons, Nikki Heaps,
put to bed, Chuck and the Pie-Maker set about
serving pies once again...*

CHUCK

It's good to be back.

NED

Yes, it is.

PULL BACK, as Chuck puts on her sunglasses and they get to
work...

INT. JAIL (ONE WALL) - DAY

The (still-costumed) Pierre is led into a cell already occupied
by SEVERAL LARGE THUGS.

NARRATOR

...and the Circus of Fun acrobat set about serving twenty-five-to-life.

INT. NUNNERY - OLIVE'S ROOM - DAY

Olive holds a large, leather-bound book on her lap: "NUNNERY RULES AND REGULATIONS."

NARRATOR

Olive, realizing that a new leaf might take some time to turn over, braced herself for a longer stay at the nunnery...

She opens the book, revealing a big bottle of whiskey hidden inside.

INT. PIE HOLE - DAY

NED

Smiles at Chuck across the room. Chuck suddenly vaults over the counter into the back again, as we hear the JINGLE of the door...

NARRATOR

Aunts Vivian and Lily...

AUNTS VIVIAN AND LILY

Walk in together, chatting, oblivious to Chuck, take a seat.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...returned to their old habits of eating pie and keeping secrets, respectively, but did not return to being shut-ins.

As Vivian closes her eyes and takes a deep sniff, Lily just watches her, smiles...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

And a mile to the West...

INT. EMERSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Emerson, behind his desk, Nikki and Georgeann stand facing him. An uncomfortable silence.

NARRATOR

...Emerson Cod gave the gift of a new beginning to others, while he still could not give it to himself.

GEORGEANN

(to Nikki)

I still can't believe you did this to me. Do you know how much trouble you've caused?

Nikki remains stubbornly silent. Emerson turns to Georgeann--

EMERSON

Twenty-four hours ago, you were tremblin'-sad, "Find my daughter. Find my daughter." Well, I found your daughter.

GEORGEANN

I don't know who she is anymore. She's completely changed.

EMERSON

So? Love what's there.

Nothing.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

Love it.

Nothing.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

Love it.

Georgeann tentatively puts a hand on Nikki's shoulder. Nikki collapses, sobbing into her mother.

NARRATOR

As mother and daughter finally discovered what they were looking for...

Emerson smiles. He looks down, moves some papers out of the way...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...the Private Investigator wondered if what he was looking for had changed too much to ever be found.

REVEAL his POP-UP BOOK on the desk, a little African-American girl's face on the cover.

EXT. LIBERTY APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Establishing...

NARRATOR

It's been 5 days, 10 hours and 28 minutes...

INT. NED'S APARTMENT - NED'S BEDROOM - DAY

Morning sunshine. Ned lies in bed, eyes open...

NARRATOR

...since the Pie-Maker's childhood sweetheart moved out of his apartment...

He looks over and we REVEAL--

CHUCK'S EMPTY BED

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...and the Pie-Maker had embraced a fresh start.

Ned sits up, a pleasant smile...

NED

(to himself)

My name is Ned. I live a simple life. I wake pies and make the dead. That was creepy. I make pies and wake the dead. I live alone, and this empty bed next to me has never been slept in by anyone at any time.

DIGBY

Looks up at Ned, tilts his head, confused...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. OLIVE'S (CHUCK'S) APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chuck is getting dressed and ready for the day...

CHUCK

I am Chuck, a single girl who has recently moved into her own apartment in a big city. Raised in a small town by two unmarried sisters I called my aunts, I have unexciting-yet-realistic hopes for my life.

Chuck puts on her hat, steps to her door...

CHUCK (CONT'D)

I have yet to meet anyone here, and today is just another day in which I fully expect nothing special...

BACK TO NED

By his door...

NED

...or exciting...

BACK TO CHUCK

CHUCK

...to happen.

INT. LIBERTY APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ned's and Olive's apartment doors open at the same time. Ned and Chuck step out, stop... a faux, yet strangely-real moment of meeting for the first time.

NED

Hi.

CHUCK

Hi.

NED

You must be the new girl in 4-E. I'm Ned.

CHUCK

I'm Charlotte.
(shy smile)
But you can call me Chuck.

NED

Hi, Chuck.

They stare at each other, a step closer, the love is gaga...

NED (CONT'D)

I would really like to kiss you right now.

So close... But Chuck strains to keep the illusion alive...

CHUCK

But we've only just met. We're two strangers
in a big city. Things take time.
(then)
I work in the Pie Hole downstairs.

Ned follows suit...

NED

Really? I own the Pie Hole downstairs. May I
walk with you?

CHUCK

That would be swell, Harvey.

NED

It's Ned, actually.

CHUCK

Oh, right. Ned. It's a nice name.

As they turn away to lock their doors...

NARRATOR

Having recently discovered that watching someone else make a fresh start alone can be fairly traumatic, the lovers-who-could-not-touch were happy to find that making a fresh start together...

Chuck and Ned simultaneously do a private little excited dance.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...was a thrill.

As they turn to exit together, whisper...

NED

Can we play this game every morning?

CHUCK

Definitely.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW