

ALONE TOGETHER

by

GEORGE F WALKER

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Begins in darkness

Sirens blaring. Horns sounding. People yelling.

Lights

On the street, at the opening to an alley.

Jess is watching as police cars and ambulances scream past.

Cara sits against the wall of an old brick building, covering her ears. Jess is 16. Cara is 15.

JESS

Okay, we gotta go. This is too much. I mean really...

(turns to Cara)

Get up. We're outta here.

Cara doesn't respond.

JESS (CONT'D)

Did you hear me? We're going!

CARA

(lifting head)

Where?

JESS

Home. This is too much. It's like there's a war going on or something.

CARA

There was a war going on at home.

JESS

Not like this. We gotta go. Come on. It's time.

CARA

Just like that? It's time just like that.

JESS

Not just like that. I've been thinking about it for awhile.

CARA

What's awhile?

JESS

Three days.

CARA

We've only been gone three days.

JESS

Right. And now we're going home.  
Because I'm pretty sure it's  
getting worse out here.

CARA

You're just nervous.

JESS

And you're not? Not even after last  
night. You were almost snatched.

CARA

Almost.

JESS

Almost means you coulda been.

CARA

No, almost means I wasn't.

Another fire truck passes.

JESS

You're lucky I was there.

CARA

Just like you promised you'd be  
when we left.

JESS

Well maybe I *can't* be there all the  
time. I mean if we don't go back,  
and we don't let them put us into  
foster care, I have to get a job,  
right.

CARA

Doing what?

JESS

I dunno.

CARA

You've never had a job.

JESS

So what?

Silence on the street. They both listen.

CARA

It's okay. They were going  
somewhere else, so it's okay where  
we are.

JESS

For now, you mean. We should go home.

CARA

It's worse at home.

JESS

Worse than that garbage hotel with those idiots banging on our door all night? Worse than that shelter with everyone in there looking like-

CARA

Like they were nuts. Like mum.

JESS

No. Not like mum.

CARA

Right. Nobody there was as out of it as mum is. They weren't yelling at us in a made-up language like she does.

JESS

No but--

CARA

Anyway we're not in that shelter now, are we? And if it starts to look like bad stuff's gonna happen we'll just hide.

JESS

Where?

CARA

(gestures into alley)  
Down there.

JESS

Great plan. We'll put ourselves into total darkness where someone can murder us without being disturbed. We were safer in our house.

CARA

No! We weren't! She coulda done anything. Burned the place down. Smashed in our heads with a hammer. It was just a matter of time, Jess! I know it!!

JESS

Okay calm down. I'm just worried about our situation, that's all.  
(MORE)

JESS (CONT'D)

We need to find a way of at least getting off the street.

CARA

Well like you said, you could get a job. Maybe you could be someone who cleans up. Like that girl cleaning up the food court yesterday.

JESS

That one you talked to?

CARA

Yeah. She was nice. Most of the people we've met so far have been pretty nice.

JESS

Except for the creeps who said really gross shit and banged on our door almost every hour... and that guy who tried to snatch you.

CARA

Yeah. Except for them. And I still think that guy just wanted to talk.

JESS

Yeah, sure. Talk about what?

CARA

I dunno. I just don't like thinking that everyone is out to hurt us like mum always said they were. That we couldn't trust anyone about anything. It's like she enjoyed scaring us. Do you think she hates us.

JESS

I don't think she knows how she feels about us anymore. She needs help.

CARA

So go help her.

JESS

And leave you out here alone?

CARA

I'll get another dog.

JESS

If you get another dog, you can't get into the shelters

CARA  
I'll feel safer with a dog.

JESS  
Until one of your friends steals  
it.

CARA  
He wasn't my friend.

JESS  
He wanted to be. When you told him  
to keep his hands off you, he  
stole Marco.

CARA  
That was some other guy.

JESS  
What?

CARA  
Some other guy did the groping. It  
was Simon who stole Marco. And  
maybe he'll bring him back.

JESS  
Why would he do that?

CARA  
Maybe he just needed him for  
something.

JESS  
Like what?

CARA  
To scare someone. He wasn't a bad  
guy really.

JESS  
No just a guy who needed a dog to  
scare someone with.

CARA  
I'm just guessing. Anyway, he  
wasn't the groper. So you shouldn't  
get them mixed up. It's not fair.

JESS  
It's not fair. Wow. Look, neither  
dude was okay. Not the groper, not  
the dog thief. And out here there's  
guys like that all over the place.  
Girls too. Like that bitch who spit  
on you.

CARA  
Yeah, what was that about?

JESS  
She saw her boyfriend checking you out.

CARA  
Okay that makes sense.

JESS  
No it doesn't. What kind of idiot spits on someone because of that?

CARA  
I would.

JESS  
No you wouldn't.

CARA  
I might. Under certain circumstances.

JESS  
Like what?

CARA  
Like *that*. If some guy I'm with checks out another girl, I might spit on her.

JESS  
Why not spit on the guy?

CARA  
I might spit on them both.

JESS  
Why not *just* the guy? What did the girl do wrong except be there.

CARA  
She coulda been smiling at him or something. Anyway, we'll see how I feel if it ever happens.

JESS  
Well whatever happens, don't spit okay. Not on anyone.

CARA  
Not even if I'm being attacked?

JESS

If you're being attacked you do whatever you need to do to save yourself. You punch, you kick, you scream...

CARA

But I don't spit.

JESS

Well what good would spitting do?

CARA

Make me feel better? Like maybe it did for you when you heard Maria Denziger saying all those bad things about mum.

JESS

I didn't spit on her. I punched her in her mean stupid face.

CARA

You spit on her first. I was there.

JESS

Well there you go. You start with spitting next thing you know you're punching. Next thing after that, you're suspended.

Cara looks hard at Jess

CARA

What makes you think you can help her all of a sudden? I mean Mum.

JESS

I know who you mean.

CARA

So?

JESS

So I don't know if I can help her. Not really. But I think I should try some more.

CARA

The doctors and everyone else gave up trying.

JESS

I'm her daughter.

CARA

So am I. You think I should try too, I guess.



JESS

Only if you want to. And you don't, right?

CARA

Well I might if she'd stop screaming at me.

JESS

How about we go back and you just ignore her.

CARA

And those crazy people she brings home sometime, I should just ignore them too? That old guy who never talks, just stares? That woman with the bread wrappers around her feet?

JESS

They're all sick.

CARA

No kidding.

JESS

She collects them off the street because she--

CARA

She what? Feels bad for them?

JESS

Or maybe she just, you know... connects or something. Gets what they're going through.

CARA

She should only be worried about what we're going through.

JESS

She probably doesn't even know where we are.

CARA

Right. Anyway I meant before... when were at home. She should have been a hell of a lot more "connected" to us.

JESS

It doesn't help to just be mad at her, Cara.

CARA

It's better than feeling sad or confused about her. A lot better.

JESS

Okay. If you say so. Anyway if we go back I'll keep all those people she brings in away from you.

CARA

You mean you'll try.

JESS

No. I'll do it. Trust me.

CARA

No. One of those sickos is going to kill me if I go back there, and you won't be able to do anything about it. Might even be Mum. She tried once.

JESS

No she didn't.

CARA

She threw a bottle at my head.

JESS

You think she wanted to kill you when she did that?

CARA

Yeah I do. You think she was just trying to scare me? She could scare me just by looking at me. I'm not going back there. I mean it. You try to take me back I'm gonna lose my shit on you.

JESS

Right. Okay. So...

CARA

How much money do we have left?

JESS

Sixty-seven dollars.

CARA

Can we get a room with that?

JESS

Maybe. But it won't be very nice.

CARA

Will it be be nicer than that park where we were last night?

JESS

I guess. But what happens tomorrow night?

CARA

I don't know. Maybe we have to start asking for money.

JESS

You mean begging.

CARA

Do we have to think of it as begging? Maybe we could think of it as us just giving people a chance to help out. I mean look at us. You're right. I'm basically a kid. And... we're girls.

JESS

So what? Didn't you see all those girls in the park. Some were younger than us. And they looked pretty messed up too.

CARA

You saying there's too much competition?

JESS

What? No. I'm saying if they don't care about them, why will they care about us?

CARA

Those girls all had tattoos, Jess. I think that turns people off. I pretty sure we'll have more luck.

JESS

Because we don't have any ink on us. And you'll really be okay doing that? Sitting on the sidewalk with a Tim Horton's cup in front of you.

CARA

As long as you're there. I mean I can't do it by myself. Maybe eventually but--

JESS

How long do you think we can do this? Live like this?

CARA

Depends.

JESS

On what?

CARA

On lots of stuff. I dunno.  
What do you think?

JESS

I think we have to go home.

CARA

Suppose we don't. Suppose we make  
enough money so that we never have  
to go home.

JESS

By cleaning up food courts?

CARA

No. Something better.

JESS

Like what?

CARA

I dunno. But someone as smart as  
you are, you'll get a good job  
eventually. We'll get an apartment  
and things will get better.

JESS

Right. And until all that happens--

CARA

We do whatever we need to do so we  
don't have to live with Mum or  
anyone else.

JESS

What about school. While I'm  
working at this great job you think  
I'll get, I'm not gonna let you  
just drop out.

CARA

Okay so I'll stay in school.

JESS

And you think you can just walk  
back in there now. They'll know you  
ran away, and they'll make you go  
home just like they did when you  
left before. They called the cops.  
And the cops brought you right back  
to the house.

CARA

It's different this time. You're  
with me. You can just tell the  
teachers that you've got it all  
under control.

JESS

They'll need to hear that from an actual adult. Maybe if we had an aunt or someone...

CARA

Yeah. And how come we don't? Not just no aunts or uncles or a grandparent. We haven't got anyone. All the kids in school have families who help. Where's ours?

JESS

They're nowhere. They don't exist. And that's just the way it is. Some day it's gonna be different. We can make our own families. I think about that a lot. We can have our own kids. And they can be there for each other and--

CARA

You think about that?

JESS

All the time.

Simon saunters on. He is somewhat older than the girls and looks like he's been on the street for quite awhile. Wiry, a bit unsettled.

SIMON

Hey... How's it goin'?

JESS

Where's our dog, Dirtbag?

SIMON

Yeah that's why I'm here. To give you your share.

JESS

Our share of what?

SIMON

Of what I got for him.

JESS

What's that mean? You sold him?

CARA

You sold our dog?

SIMON

Yeah... so you get half, right. Half of the fifty.

JESS

What the...

SIMON

You want more? Half is pretty fair because I'm the one who--

CARA

He was our dog. You can't sell our dog, man.

SIMON

Except I did. Because of our circumstances, right. I mean I thought--

CARA

We need him back!

SIMON

No you don't.

JESS

(approaching)

Yeah we do. So go do that. Go get him back!

SIMON

No it's a done deal. The old guy took a big liking to him and that was that.

JESS

What old guy? Where?

SIMON

In the park. He already had a dog with him, but your dog and his got along real well so he--

JESS

Go get him back.

SIMON

That can't happen.

JESS

(moving in)

Go get Marco back right now!

SIMON

His name's Marco? I like that.

JESS

Who cares!?

SIMON

Right. Look, you're not thinking this through. A dog isn't the best thing for you right now. Sure, he might offer some protection but how about-

JESS

Give it to me.

SIMON

...feeding him. That was a pretty big dog so he--

JESS

I said give it to me!

SIMON

What?

JESS

The money.

SIMON

You mean your share?

JESS

I mean all of it!

SIMON

That can't happen.

CARA

That means he spent some.

JESS

Did you?

SIMON

Kinda.

JESS

Kinda? Jesus. Okay give me the rest.

SIMON

We should talk this through a little...

JESS

Give it to me!

CARA

She means it.

SIMON

Yeah I get that but--

JESS

Now! Give it to me now, or I'm gonna go grab a cop and--

SIMON

Okay, no need for that. That kind of behaviour is frowned upon out here, you know.

JESS

But not stealing dogs? That's okay, is it?

SIMON

Depends.

CARA

Depends on what?

SIMON

Circumstances. What else?

(he digs money out)

Here...

He hands it to Cara. She hands it to Jess.

SIMON (CONT'D)

(to Jess)

But if you're planning to go give that money back, you might wanna consider that it's gonna be dark pretty soon. And you could use that money to help you get through the night out here.

CARA

What's that mean?

JESS

Drugs. He thinks we should buy drugs with it.

SIMON

Or liquor. Whatever works for you.

JESS

What would work best for us would be for you to disappear, Dirtbag.

(to Cara)

Stay right where you are. Just watch our stuff, and don't go anywhere with him.

Jess starts off.

SIMON

(to Cara)

He'll be gone.

(MORE)



SIMON (CONT'D)

If she's intending to get the dog back, that guy will be gone by now, for sure.

CARA

You better hope he's not.

SIMON

What is that, a threat? Why's she so hostile anyway? She won't get very far in this life with that attitude.

CARA

Whatya mean *this* life. The one we were living before was way worse.

SIMON

Maybe you think that now, but after a while you get worn down. My advice is to go back home, and make the best of it.

CARA

And my advice to you is to stop stealing people's dogs.

SIMON

I do what I need to do.

An ambulance drives by.

SIMON (CONT'D)

You sleeping back there in the alley tonight?

CARA

Maybe. I'm not sure,

SIMON

Well if you do, you're definitely gonna need something to get you relaxed. You do Oxi?

CARA

I don't *do* anything. Sometimes I smoke.

SIMON

Weed?

CARA

Yeah weed. What else? You think I smoke cigarettes? That's for losers.

SIMON

I was just asking.

CARA

Because?

SIMON

I got a couple of pills I can spare.

CARA

How much?

SIMON

How much is what you ask a supplier. We're friends.

CARA

No we're not.

SIMON

We could be.

CARA

You saying that the way you did... kinda freaks me out.

SIMON

I think that's mostly because of our situation. If I'd said it in your school cafeteria you'd probably be okay with it. The situation we're in makes everything sound bad. You gotta watch out for that, or next thing you know you're behaving like an animal or something.

Jess comes back. Out of breath.

CARA

Was he gone?

JESS

Yeah. But...

(catching her breath)

... there was something going on in the park...

Another police car goes past. Siren and lights.

JESS (CONT'D)

I gotta go see if...

She runs back a little.

SIMON

Probably another bomb scare. There's been one every couple of weeks. And one day it's probably gonna happen.

CARA

Why? Who'd want to blow up a park?

SIMON

Not the park. The people. They call it a soft target.

CARA

Who does? The cops?

SIMON

No the terrorists. Hey it's a dangerous world. Nobody's safe.

Jess returns.

CARA

What were you doing?

JESS

Making sure they didn't follow me.

CARA

The terrorists?

JESS

What? No, the--

SIMON

The cops?

JESS

Yeah one of them.

(to Cara)

And there was that woman. You remember the woman in that shelter the first night?

CARA

There were a lot of women there.

(to Simon)

Most of them right out of it. Probably some of your customers...

(to Jess)

He's a drug dealer.

SIMON

Hey that's not true. That's an assumption I can't live with, man.

(to Jess)

Honest. I was just offering her something for relaxation purposes.

Jess is distractedly looking back. Still on guard.

SIMON (CONT'D)

(to Cara)

Was there any talk of money being handed over? No.

CARA

(to Jess)

What woman in the shelter were you talking about?

JESS

She was asking us a lot of questions.

CARA

Oh the one from... somewhere.

JESS

Poland. No not her. This one was from--

SIMON

Russia? There's a lot of Russians here now. I think a lot of them were brought over as sex slaves.

JESS

(eyes closed)

Child Services. She gave me her card, and she was from Child Services. Anyway she was there in the park with a cop, and I saw her point me out to him. He started over to me, but then there were all these sirens and a bunch of other cops in cars showed up, so I just took off... and I just went back to make sure they didn't see where I went. And they didn't, I guess. So...

SIMON

(laughs)

Saved by the bomb. I mean bomb scare. Saved by the--

JESS

Go away. I need to talk to my sister. Alone.

SIMON

Right. Fine....

(he starts off, stops)

You could have just asked... nicely.

He leaves.

Cara smiles.

CARA

Hey. I just remembered my shoe money.

JESS

What?

CARA

You know, that ten dollars you told me to always have on me for an emergency.

JESS

That was like five or six years ago.

CARA

Whatever. It's still there under the insole. So that's good.

JESS

No. It's not. It's not good.

CARA

Well it's not bad.

JESS

No it's not bad. But just because something's not bad doesn't make it good.

CARA

Well it's better than nothing. I mean since we might have to take off, right. I mean because we're being hunted.

JESS

We're not being *hunted*. We're being looked for.

CARA

Same thing. The results will be the same if they catch us.

JESS

Except we won't be dead.

CARA

You don't get it. Why can't you ever really get it. Going back to that house is like being dead to me.

JESS

Well that's just stupid. Dead is dead. Dead is when it's all over--

CARA

All over is what it felt like to me.

JESS

Okay it was weird and sometimes scary there but--

CARA

Not just there. Everywhere. What I felt like in that house, I felt everywhere. Because I *lived* in that house. With *that* woman. And people knew that. All that crying she started doing around the school. Hugging everyone. All the kids. Their parents. The teachers. And it sure wasn't the same there after that, was it. Because they all knew what she was like. Every one of my friends knew. They talked about it behind my back. Or they just ignored me.

JESS

Me too.

CARA

Yeah. Man. Did they think they were going to catch it from us.

JESS

Kids are age don't always get what's going on with that kind of sickness. It scared them.

CARA

Scared them. So what? I guess that means we didn't have any real friends.

JESS

Yeah maybe. And now here we are. It's been three days. It feels like three months. And it's getting dark. And the darkness freaks me out.

CARA

Maybe we'll get used to it.

JESS

Is that what you want, to get used to it?

CARA

Just until it gets better.

JESS

You mean until I get a job cleaning in a food court, and we get our own apartment. We weren't brought up to live like this. When Dad was still around we had things. We had good food. Even alone with Mum there was always--

CARA

A roof. Yeah. Thank God for that roof, eh.

JESS

What I'm saying is I don't think we can make it.

CARA

I can if you can. And you definitely can. When all that garbage she caused woulda been too much for anyone else, you dealt with it.

JESS

Not really.

CARA

Well you made sure she didn't burn the place down.

(she sits against the wall)

I'm not going back.

JESS

I know.

CARA

I can't...

JESS

(sitting next to her)

I know.

Simon returns with crumpled bags of food. Burgers. Fries. Cokes.

SIMON

Who's hungry?

(handing it out)

I brought a feast.

JESS  
(off the burgers)  
You don't have to eat like this,  
you know.

SIMON  
Don't you mean thank you?

JESS  
For the same amount of money you  
could have gotten something  
healthy.

SIMON  
Not from anywhere around here, I  
couldn't. The closest apple is  
twelve blocks away. This is an  
urban desert. We might as well be  
survivors of an apocalypse.

JESS  
Jeez...

CARA  
Just eat it, Jess. It won't kill  
you.

JESS  
It will actually.

SIMON  
You've got a big adjustment to  
make, Jess.

JESS  
So do you, Dirtbag.

SIMON  
Simon. And what's that? What  
adjustment do I have to make?

JESS  
You can start off by not staring at  
our breasts all the time.

SIMON  
I don't do that.

CARA  
Not all the time anyway.

JESS  
Just too much of the time.

SIMON  
Okay. If that's true, I'm sorry.  
I'm just...



JESS  
Horny?

SIMON  
Lonely.

CARA  
And horny.

SIMON  
Yeah. But also lonely.

CARA  
Don't you have any friends?

SIMON  
No. I mean who has the time, right.  
There's so much to do just getting  
through the day.

JESS  
Besides stealing dogs you mean.

SIMON  
If the three of us are gonna  
establish a bond, you gotta let  
that go, okay.

JESS  
What do you mean by a bond, Simon.

CARA  
It has to be something besides sex.

SIMON  
Besides sex. But not without sex?

JESS  
Okay, listen... with her it's rape.  
With me, it's never gonna happen.

CARA  
Nothing personal. She's gay.

SIMON  
Really. I'm okay with that.

JESS  
That's big of you.

CARA  
Which part? Which part are you okay  
with?

SIMON  
Both parts. I mean if you're jail  
bait, that's out of the question  
for sure.

(MORE)

SIMON (CONT'D)

(to Jess)

And there's no way I'm gonna try to turn you. I'm not that good. So there you go. A clear path to friendship.

JESS

Whoopee.

CARA

(to Simon)

So tell us about your average day.

SIMON

Whatya mean?

JESS

She wants you to explain all the things you do to survive.

SIMON

Oh. Well first off, I'm a child of the van.

CARA

What?

SIMON

That's where I lived with my parents until I was 12. In a van. Then I took off on my own.

CARA

Because?

SIMON

Because my parents had enough trouble taking care of themselves. And I figured I'd do better by myself anyway.

JESS

Did you?

SIMON

Well at least I didn't have to worry about them anymore. They were pretty pathetic. I mean they'd grown up in a certain amount of comfort, and they couldn't adjust to having nothing. Kinda like you.

JESS

Maybe. Maybe not.

CARA

Where are your parents now?

SIMON

Don't know. Went back to where the van was parked a few months after I'd left and it was gone. That was seven years ago.

CARA

And you don't know where they are.

SIMON

Well they never call. They never write.

(off their looks)

That was a joke.

JESS

Okay...

CARA

I think I'm gonna puke.

JESS

What's wrong?

CARA

The... burger.

She heads to the back of the alley.

JESS

Where'd you get it?

SIMON

What?

JESS

The food.

SIMON

Whatya mean?

JESS

In the trash?

SIMON

Come on.

JESS

It's outta the garbage, man. It's cold.

SIMON

Okay look. Before you go off on me, try to appreciate the effort I put in. It needed some work to be... presentable. An untouched bun had to be matched with some uneaten meat and--

JESS

Jesus...

SIMON

It's okay. It's just regular food...

JESS

From the garbage...

SIMON

*Today's* garbage.

JESS

Go away.

Jess is gathering up the food. Hers and what Cara left behind.

JESS (CONT'D)

Here. Take this shit. And leave. You're not helping.

SIMON

(looks at her)

Are you sure?

JESS

What?

SIMON

You don't belong out here. Neither of you.

JESS

We'll be okay.

SIMON

No. You won't. Look this is an act of kindness. You needed to see what it's like. Shit can happen. People get robbed and beaten. People have to steal. Beg. Eat garbage. They get sick.

Cara is coming back. Wiping her mouth with her sleeve.

SIMON (CONT'D)

You people know nothing.

JESS

That's not true.

SIMON

Okay you know about your some variation on a hard home life. But not much else. Not enough to be out here.

CARA  
What's he talking about?

JESS  
He fed us garbage to teach us a lesson. Maybe he even stole our dog to teach us a lesson...

SIMON  
Go home. You're still children.

CARA  
There are girls younger than us out here.

SIMON  
Not like you, there aren't. They all had to deal with real serious stuff from the time they were barely walking.

CARA  
And we didn't?

JESS  
Well it didn't really start until a couple of years ago.

CARA  
What's it matter when it started? It was still awful. It was still dangerous and--

JESS  
(to Simon)  
Our mother got sick. She had a breakdown and then--

CARA  
She went freakin' nuts.

JESS  
We tried to get help.

CARA  
But that didn't work out. None of it.

SIMON  
What about Child Services?

JESS  
We heard they woulda had to separate us. And I couldn't let that happen.

CARA  
So we left. Because--

JESS  
Because it was getting really  
crappy.

SIMON  
Yeah. Okay....

He starts off.

CARA  
Where you going?

SIMON  
To get you some real food.

He leaves.

CARA  
Who is this guy?

JESS  
I don't know. He's...

CARA  
Weird?

JESS  
Yeah. How you feeling?

CARA  
Okay. I got all dizzy when I saw  
those teeth marks on the bun.

JESS  
They're going to find us  
eventually. That woman from Child  
Services isn't going to give up.

CARA  
So we'll move somewhere. Get on a  
bus.

JESS  
There's no future, Cara. There's no  
job I can get. There's no nice  
apartment we can get. There's  
nothing but *this* forever. And he's  
right. We're not--

CARA  
He was saying we were spoiled,  
right. That's basically what he was  
saying.

JESS  
I guess, yeah.

CARA

So what does he know. I'd give him a month with that woman in our house and her loonie pals. That's like ten years out here. And then there's...

JESS

What?

CARA

(crying)

She's our mum. She used to love us. She never yelled at us. Or threw things at us. She just loved us. And then she stopped. She just stopped. And that's the worst, I think that's the worst thing that could happen to anyone.

JESS

(hugging her)

I know. And I know you can't go back. But maybe *I* can. Maybe I can go home and try harder to get her help.

CARA

What about me?

JESS

You could go into foster care.

CARA

Alone?

JESS

Just for awhile. Just until--

CARA

You tried. You can't help her.

JESS

Probably not. But I have to do something. So I was thinking that I could start looking for Dad. Maybe he can--

CARA

He ran away, Jess. He left us with her.

JESS

But he didn't know.

CARA

Know what?

JESS

She hadn't turned on us yet. He got it all thrown at *him*, so maybe he thought it'd be better for us if he just went away.

CARA

I think he's a coward. I think he was just taking care of himself.

JESS

Okay, but suppose there's a chance I'm right.

CARA

There's not! And I don't wanna talk about him anymore. Okay?

JESS

Okay...

She hugs Cara tighter.

Simon returns with another bag of food.

CARA

What's that?

SIMON

Like I told you... real food.

JESS

Fresh off the grill?

SIMON

From the deli.

He sits inside the alley. Just off the street.

SIMOM

Come on. Make yourselves comfortable.

They join him.

SIMOM (CONT'D)

Okay here's the thing. The real deal. You're completely on your own, and you're not prepared to stay out here.

CARA

Says you.

JESS

A person we don't even know.



SIMON

That woman you met in the shelter,  
the one who pointed you out to the  
cop... Did you bother to look at  
the card she gave you?

JESS

How do you know she did that?

SIMON

Doesn't matter. You still got it?

JESS

Yeah.

SIMON

Look at it. She's not from Child  
Services.

Jess takes it out. Reads it.

JESS

What's this? The Harbour?

SIMON

It's a place she runs. You know,  
for kids like you.

CARA

Kids she can turn into sex slaves,  
you mean. I've read about that  
shit.

SIMON

Well at least you're not totally  
out of it. Look if I see people  
like you... people in over their  
heads, I let her know that you  
probably need her to... get  
involved.

CARA

Why?

JESS

She means why do you do it?

SIMON

Nevermind that for now.

JESS

Okay. And if she gets involved she  
does...?

SIMON

Whatever needs to be done to keep  
you safe.

(off the card)  
(MORE)

SIMON (CONT'D)

That's her organization. She started it.

JESS

And she's not a social worker or anything?

SIMON

No...

CARA

So what's her deal then?

SIMON

She was a runaway herself. So she knows all about what it means.

JESS

Really. What does she think it means?

SIMON

Nothing good. Look, you go to her place and she'll do whatever she can for you. But you gotta go to her. She won't keep looking for you because she hasn't got the time. How's the sandwich?

CARA

Good.

SIMON

So what about it? I can take you to her place when we're finished eating.

JESS

We'll think about it.

SIMON

Marco's there.

CARA

Really?

SIMON

Yeah. Come on, what kind of asshole would sell someone's dog. That was just part of making sure you knew how vulnerable you are. He's there. He's fine.

CARA

So...all those things you did and said were just supposed to scare us.

SIMON  
Yeah. That's right.

JESS  
Well they didn't. They just pissed  
me off.

SIMON  
(to Cara)  
What about you?

CARA  
Same.

SIMON  
Even those things about me, my  
life. Not knowing where my parents  
are?

JESS  
I just felt bad for you.

SIMON  
Well maybe next time I should add a  
few more gruesome details.

JESS  
So they were all lies.

SIMON  
A tactic. Not lies. Okay lies. But  
kids weren't getting the message.  
So we thought scaring the crap out  
of the new ones might work....

JESS  
And scaring the crap outta us  
included the guy who tried to  
snatch her.

SIMON  
That happened?

JESS  
Yeah.

SIMON  
Well that was real then. That was a  
real thing.

JESS  
Jesus...

SIMON  
Yeah. Look, why not just go meet  
Jayne. Let her hear what was going  
on at home. She might be able to--

JESS  
(to Cara)  
She'll get them involved.

SIMON  
Who?

JESS  
Child Services. She'll have to eventually.  
(to Simon)  
We're not ready. I've got a plan I need to try first. I'm gonna find our father.

SIMON  
He's not around?

JESS  
Well he's around somewhere. I just need to find where that is.

CARA  
Our mum drove him away. She's crazy.

JESS  
She's got some mental problems.

SIMON  
Really. Has she been diagnosed?

JESS  
A few times. She's a schizophrenic. Or she's bipolar or she's borderline--

CARA  
Like it makes any difference what they call it anyway.

SIMON  
It makes a difference in how they treat it. Look are you going to go see my friend Jane or not.

JESS  
We haven't decided.

SIMON  
Okay. Well let me help you with that.

He takes out a badge. Shows it to her.

CARA  
What's that?

JESS

He's a cop.

CARA

(off the badge)

An actual cop? Not a social worker or something.

SIMON

(off the badge)

They don't give these to social workers. And here's the deal. You go see my pal Jayne or I hand you over to Child's Services and what happens to you from then on is totally in their hands.

CARA

(to Jess)

A cop.

JESS

Yeah...

CARA

An actual cop.

JESS

One who goes into garbage to get food that'll make us sick.

CARA

Yeah, really.

JESS

(shaking her head)

Unbelievable... So you're like a total fake.

SIMON

We're trying to save lives, Cara. Listen, I'll tell Jayne that going home is never going to be an option. And maybe she can think up some other--

CARA

So you're like undercover.

JESS

And this is what you're supposed to do? Trick kids into getting help.

CARA

Faker.

JESS  
(to Simon)  
How old are you?

SIMON  
Twenty-four.

JESS  
I thought you were younger. Except when I look at you now, you don't. You kinda look your real age. It's the way you're dressed. And your hair is dirty. You put a lot of effort into fooling people.

SIMON  
Into *helping* people.

CARA  
By fooling them.

SIMON  
Why are you concentrating on that? On the fooling instead of the helping?

JESS  
Because we don't like being fooled. That's what our mum does to people. She doesn't take her pills and then when the social worker or the nurse comes around she gets it together.

CARA  
We don't know how...

JESS  
...and she fools them into thinking she's fine. That *everything* is great. She cleans the house top to bottom. They've never seen such a clean house.

CARA  
And she talks to them like she's normal.

JESS  
They've never talked to a more normal person.

CARA  
And when they're gone she looks at us and says, "That should help."

JESS  
She means help keep them away. And it does.

CARA

So fooling is a bad thing.

SIMON

Did you ever tell the social worker what your mum was doing.

JESS

All the time. They didn't believe us. They said it was impossible for someone with her condition to do that "convincingly." They said no one could pull that off.

CARA

But our mum can.

JESS

And that just makes her scarier.

CARA

We can't go back.

JESS

I can. If I can if find my dad and get him to help me with her.

SIMON

What's your dad like?

CARA

Scared. Scared and weak.

JESS

He had it pretty rough in that house. I mean he wasn't perfect...

CARA

He was supposed to take care of us, right. I told him I thought she was going to kill me, the way she got so mad.

SIMON

And what did he do?

JESS

He got her put in the hospital twice.

CARA

She lied her way out both times.

JESS

The last time she got so mad about him doing it, she said she was going to slit his throat while he was asleep. I guess he believed her because he left that afternoon.

SIMON

It sounds like she's really sick.

CARA

We don't care.

JESS

She means it's not enough for someone to say that.

CARA

We heard that a lot.

JESS

And no one could make her better.

CARA

So do you know someone who can?

SIMON

Not unless she agrees to take medication.

CARA

So that means no.

SIMON

It means it'll be hard but... Look You can go through everything with Jane and see what she can come up with about your mother, your situation... the whole thing. Plus you can get Marco back. Whatya say?

JESS

We need to talk about it first.

He is just looking at them.

JESS (CONT'D)

Just us. You can go. We'll catch up. The address is on the card, right.

SIMON

Yeah, but I can wait.

CARA

We don't want you to wait.



JESS

We think better when we're alone.

SIMON

Sure. But like I said, you really don't have a choice. So if you think you can just disappear on me, you're wrong, okay.

He is gone.

CARA

So what do you wanna do?

JESS

We have to make a choice, I guess. What are the chances of finding Dad and getting him to come back and help us...

CARA

Not good probably.

JESS

Yeah. And suppose they put mum in a hospital. That means foster care for us.

CARA

Maybe separately.

JESS

Probably separately.

CARA

No. I can't be alone without you. We have to be alone together.

JESS

I know.

CARA

I mean it. I can't take that chance.

JESS

I know. So should we take off then?

CARA

He said he could find us.

JESS

Maybe he was just saying that. I mean he is full of shit, right.

CARA

Yeah. Big time.

JESS  
All those things he did to scare  
us. Bringing us food from the  
garbage.

CARA  
Too much.

JESS  
Yeah. Crazy really. Like we didn't  
get enough of that crazy stuff at  
home.

CARA  
I think we're better on our own.

JESS  
Yeah. So we should just get on a  
bus and disappear then.

CARA  
Yeah...

JESS  
But first we should go to where  
this Jayne person is.

CARA  
Why?

JESS  
To get our dog back.

CARA  
Right.

JESS  
I mean if she's got a plan that  
might help us. And keep us together  
we could listen...

CARA  
Yeah. Listen. But not get fooled.

JESS  
Right.

CARA  
And if she tries to fool us even a  
little...

JESS  
We're out of there.

CARA  
Good...

JESS  
So that's a plan then. I mean until  
we come with a better one.

CARA  
Right.

They gather their few belongings.

The sounds of a man and a woman on the street screaming at  
each other. Then a gun shot.

They freeze. Look at each other.

JESS  
Let's go.

They start off.

CARA  
Yeah...

JESS  
Hurry.

CARA  
Yeah...

JESS  
Faster!

They continue off. Quickly.

THE END