finding carter

by

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Based on
"Finding Carter"
by
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COLD OPEN

INT. JUST SAY YO (YOGURT SHOP) – 8 P.M.-ISH

CARTER STEVENS, 16, (think Buffy, minus the vampire slaying) and her mother LORI, mid-40s, (cool, fun mom) are at Just Say Yo, a yogurt sundae bar. It’s a slow summer night in York, Pennsylvania, a nothing-ever-happens-here kind of town. Lori piles many different toppings on her yogurt. Carter just dumps scoop after scoop of gummi bears on hers.

CARTER
I just have to say, it’s starting to piss me off.

LORI
What is?

CARTER
How it’s the same every time. Hello, two people, wow, clearly they should be together, but we have to sit there for two hours watching them figure that out. The end. Nothing happens except what we knew was going to happen!

LORI
Because it’s a romantic comedy. Not “Anna Karenina.”

CARTER
Great. Now you ruined “Anna Karenina.”

They go to the cash register; Lori pays for the yogurts.

LORI
(off Carter’s cup)
Carter, they have cookie dough. Fruity Pebbles. Crushed Oreos ... I can’t believe I’m begging my child to eat crushed Oreos for dinner. I am the worst mother.

CARTER
Stop it. I love when we have a movie and Just Say Yo night.

LORI
Me too.

They sit at a table.
LORI (CONT’D)
But the idea is to get something that blends with the yogurt and enhances the taste. Sadly, that’s my idea of a cooking tip.

CARTER
You know what I loved, when I was little, how you would say, “If we ever get separated -- “

LORI
“ -- I’ll meet you by the nearest tub of gummi bears.”

CARTER
And one day at school, we had a cop come talk to us about safety -- (mimics a stern voice)
“Never get in a car with anyone you don’t know. Don’t go with people who ask you to help find their dog. And if you’re ever lost, what’s the first thing you look for?”

Under dialogue, Carter’s cellphone trills, indicating she has a text message. Carter reaches for it.

CARTER (CONT’D)
(like an eager child)
“Gummi bears!” That cop did not like me.

They both laugh. Carter checks her phone, shakes her head.

CARTER (CONT’D)
Max.

LORI
I thought you two broke up.

CARTER
We did. He’s just too lazy to find someone else.

LORI
So what is this, a booty call?

CARTER
No! Uccch, mom! He’s just letting me know everyone’s hanging out -- please never say the words “booty call” to me ever again.
LORI
Go. Hang out with your friends.

CARTER
Hunh-uh. This is our night.

LORI
We saw a movie.
(off yogurt cup)
We had dinner. I’m good.

CARTER
You sure?

LORI
Hang out with your mom when you could be with your friends? That’s just weird. I won’t let you.

Carter gives Lori a quick peck on the cheek before racing off. This is their standard goodbye:

CARTER
Love you.

LORI
Love you more.

CARTER
Not possible.

LORI
Yes possible.

Carter goes.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

(NOTE: SCENE TO BE RESET IN A TBD DIFFERENT LOCATION FOR PRESENTATION PURPOSES)

CLOSE ON a pair of hands -- Carter’s -- working an unbent paper clip inside the lock on a door. There’s a satisfying click, and we pull back to see a triumphant Carter and several of her friends, including MAX, a sexy stoner.

MAX
Niiiiice --

But then they hear the PERSISTENT BEEPING of an alarm system.

MAX (CONT’D)
Uh oh.
Carter slips inside the darkened building. A beat later, the beeping stops. Carter pops her head out, Cheshire cat grin.

CARTER
(chiding Max)
When will you learn to trust me?

Carter ducks back inside; the others follow her in.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - POOL AREA - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

(NOTE: THIS SCENE ALSO TO BE RESET IN A TBD DIFFERENT LOCATION FOR PRESENTATION PURPOSES)

The kids have gathered in the shallow end of the pool, goofing around, drinking, smoking pot. Max is in the process of backing Carter into a corner of the pool.

MAX
‘Member the last time we were here?

CARTER
I remember that you almost drowned trying to show me your handstand.

Max now has Carter cornered, leaning his head to her neck.

MAX
What else?

Carter looks like she is about to give in to Max’s seduction, then suddenly drops underwater and swims under his arm. She comes up to see two uniformed COPS and a SCHOOL SECURITY GUARD.

COP A
(clapping forcefully)
Fun’s over! Everyone out of the pool!

The kid with the joint immediately submerges it.

COP A (CONT’D)
(re: the joint)
Nice try. Let’s see. We got breaking and entering, possession of an illegal substance, underage drinking --

Carter and her friends, except Max, climb out of the pool.

CARTER
(to Cop A)
Officer, listen, this was a bad idea. We screwed up, we know that --
COP A
And I should just let you off with a warning.

CARTER
We’re good kids. Having some harmless fun.

COP B
(off Max)
This one’s naked.

COP A
Indecent exposure. Sorry, guys. We’re taking you in. Let’s go.
(to Max)
You too, Magic Mike.

Off Carter and her friends, knowing they’re screwed.

INT. POLICE STATION - HOLDING CELL - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Carter and her friends are in a holding cell.

CARTER
It’s outrageous. School board cuts the music program but puts in a state-of-the-art surveillance system. That’s a blatant misuse of funds.

MAX
(off where they are)
Is it, though?

The kids laugh. Cop A enters, opening the cell.

COP A
Next time this happens, you’ll be talking to a judge. Tonight, you just have to face your parents. Let’s go.

Everyone stands to file out. Cop A stops Carter.

COP A (CONT’D)
Not you. Yours isn’t here yet.

CARTER
(to her departing friends)
I’m fine. See you on the outside.

As the kids exit, Cop A locks the cell with just Carter in it.

DISSOLVE TO:
Carter lays on her back on the cell’s hard bench, eyes following a fly, as someone unlocks the cell. Angle on: SUSAN SHERMAN, not a cop, a bureaucrat, sporting a CPS (Children’s Protective Services) ID badge.

CARTER
Awww. And I was just getting comfortable.

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - CONFERENCE ROOM - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Carter sits at a table. Susan places a soda and chips in front of her.

CARTER
Listen, I get it. This is some kind of scared straight thing you and my mom worked out.
(hands up)
I’m set straight. Can I go home now?

SUSAN SHERMAN
I’m sorry, Carter, it’s not that simple.

CARTER
Why not? Where’s my mom? Can we get her in here?

SUSAN SHERMAN
Your mom’s not here.
(beat)
She’s not coming.

CARTER
She can’t be that mad. Let me call her.

SUSAN SHERMAN
Right now, we are doing all we can to locate her.

CARTER
Wait, wait, wait -- what do you mean? Did something happen? Is she okay?

SUSAN SHERMAN
Carter ... I need you to listen to me.

CARTER
I am. I’m listening. What?
SUSAN SHERMAN
My name is Susan Sherman. I work for
Childrens’ Protective Services.

CARTER
Can you just skip to the part where my
mom is missing?

SUSAN SHERMAN
Your mother ... she goes by the name
Lori Stevens?

CARTER
What does that mean -- goes by?

SUSAN SHERMAN
That’s not her real name.
(carefully)
Carter Stevens is not your real name.

CARTER
Well, it’s my name, and it’s real.
What are you --

SUSAN SHERMAN
When you were three years old, you were
abducted from the front lawn of your
home in Great Falls, Virginia. The
woman you think is your mother is not
your mother. She is your kidnapper.

CARTER
(frightened and angry)
That’s crazy! Stop talking!
(standing)
I’m going home!

Carter runs for the door, desperate to get out of there, but
Susan Sherman keeps her from leaving.

SUSAN SHERMAN
Carter --

CARTER
I just want to go home. I just want to
see my mother.

Susan Sherman puts her arm around Carter, comforting her.

SUSAN SHERMAN
You will, Carter.
(then)
But it’s going to be a different home.
And a different mother.
Off Carter’s terror and confusion.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POLICE STATION – CONFERENCE ROOM – A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Carter is back at the table, now flanked by Susan Sherman and IRIS DAWSON, an uber-professional FBI analyst. Carter looks like she’s trapped in a “Twilight Zone” episode and she needs to figure out how to get out of it.

SUSAN SHERMAN
Does the name Lyndon mean anything to you? Lyndon Wilson.

CARTER
No.

IRIS DAWSON
That’s your real name. Lyndon Wilson.

CARTER
Excuse me, Agent --
(searching for Iris’ name)

IRIS DAWSON
Dawson.

CARTER
Agent Dawson. I know the FBI is very good at ... being the FBI, but I think there’s been some kind of computer glitch, or something got filed wrong --

Susan slides Carter’s mug shot in front of her.

SUSAN SHERMAN
This is your mug shot, from last night.

CARTER
Can I keep this?

Iris Dawson slides another photo in front of Carter. It’s one of her at three years old.

IRIS DAWSON
This is you a month before you were abducted.

Carter studies the picture. She’s never seen it before. She is confused, scared, overwhelmed by what this picture means.
CARTER
I’ve never seen this picture. It might not be me.

IRIS DAWSON
It’s you. See?
(pointing at the two pictures)
The ears. They’re the same.

CARTER
It’s an ear. It looks like an ear.

IRIS DAWSON
Actually, ears are as distinct and unique as dental records. Which we also have.

She pushes over a folder.

IRIS DAWSON (CONT’D)
And fingerprints.

Iris produces a card mounted with two strips of fingerprints, one smaller than the other.

IRIS DAWSON (CONT’D)
(off the first set)
These were taken last night.
(off the smaller set)
These we lifted from your toys after you disappeared thirteen years ago.

A beat of silence. Carter pushes away all the evidence.

CARTER
But my mom --
(adamant)
-- my mom would never do this.

SUSAN SHERMAN
People abduct children for many reasons.

CARTER
Sick people.

SUSAN SHERMAN
She might have been depressed. It could be she lost a child of her own. Or believed she would never have children.
CARTER
Stop talking about her! You don’t know her. She’s an amazing person, and even if what you’re saying is true, I don’t care, I still want her to be my mother.

IRIS DAWSON
Carter ... you understand that can’t happen.

SUSAN SHERMAN
Your real parents are here. Right down the hall. They’re very anxious to see you.

CARTER
Now? No! I’m not ready.

There’s a knock on the conference room door, and Susan Sherman opens it. COP C stands at the door, with two people right behind him -- Carter’s parents, ELIZABETH and DAVID WILSON.

SUSAN SHERMAN
I’m sorry, we need a little more time.

A glimpse of Carter is all it takes -- Elizabeth bursts into the room, desperate to see the child she thought was lost forever. David follows, more cautious, more sensitive to the situation. Elizabeth stops short, gasping at the sight of Carter.

ELIZABETH
Lyndon ...

She goes up to Carter, and reaches out to touch her face. She is crying, but her expression is one of pure and utter joy.

ELIZABETH (CONT’D)
Lyndon.
(a beat)
Do you know who I am?

David stays behind his wife, hands on her shoulders for support. Carter looks at her for a long beat.

CARTER
No.

ELIZABETH
(heartbroken)
You don’t remember me at all?

CARTER
I’m sorry.
DAVID
Lizzie, she needs time ... we all do.
(to Carter)
I’m your dad.

CARTER
I figured.

ELIZABETH
What about your twin sister? Do you remember Taylor?

CARTER
(stunned by this news)
I have a sister ... I didn’t think I had any relatives.

ELIZABETH
Is that what she told you? That monster who stole you from us?

CARTER
She wasn’t a monster!

ELIZABETH
She stole you, she brainwashed you, when you were only three years old --

DAVID
Do we know who she was?

Iris Dawson pulls a photo from a folder and hands it to David.

IRIS DAWSON
Does she look familiar? She goes by the name Lori Stephens --

CARTER
Can you please stop saying “goes by”?  

ELIZABETH
David. David. Oh my God --

DAVID
(to Iris Dawson)
We know her.

Off Carter’s shock.

DISSOLVE TO:
Carter sits off by herself, while her parents each stake out some corner of the room for a cellphone conversation. Elizabeth’s voice is commanding; David’s is soothing.

ELIZABETH
(commanding, into phone)
Kyle, that’s impossible. She must be in the system. Her one and only crime is stealing my child? I don’t think so. Have we reached out to Mexico? To Canada? Well, get them to prioritize this!

DAVID
(into his phone)
She’s fine, she looks great ... she’s in shock, of course. We all are ... yes, believe me --

He throws a look to a preoccupied Elizabeth, and then at a dazed Carter.

DAVID (CONT’D)
(into phone)
-- we’re all very anxious to get home.

He hangs up, goes to Carter, puts a hand on her shoulder.

DAVID (CONT’D)
(to Carter)
How you holding up?

Carter gives him a look: You did not just fucking ask me that.

ELIZABETH
(still barking orders, into phone)
I want her picture visible to all TSA personnel. Train, bus, car rental agents.

CARTER
She sounds like a cop.

DAVID
She is a cop.
(he’s used to being corrected)
Sorry. Detective.
DAVID (CONT’D)
(to Elizabeth)
We should get going. We have a long drive and they’re all waiting --

Elizabeth holds out a “one minute” finger.

ELIZABETH
(into phone)
And put out there’s a reward. Ten thousand dollars.

DAVID
(to Elizabeth)
Who’s paying that reward? Are we paying that reward?

ELIZABETH
(to David)
I want this woman caught! Isn’t that what you want?

DAVID
You know I do.

CARTER
Does anyone care what I want?

David and Elizabeth look at each other, chagrined.

DAVID
Of course --

ELIZABETH
(simultaneous, into phone)
Kyle. Let me call you back.

She hangs up.

CARTER
My mother ... she was your friend?

ELIZABETH
Clearly, she wasn’t.

DAVID
We were friendly.

ELIZABETH
She said her name was Janet --
DAVID
She did in-home hospice care. Stayed with people the last few days of their lives. One of them lived on our street, that’s when we met her.

CARTER
She sounds like a good person.

DAVID
She was. We thought she was.

ELIZABETH
(frustrated)
Janet what? Why can’t I remember?

DAVID
She always said we had such a beautiful family. I thought she was being sweet.

ELIZABETH
You know what else she said? “I love your girls. Too bad you can’t spend more time with them.” She was monitoring my work hours!

CARTER
You didn’t spend time with us?

ELIZABETH
Of course I did!
(then)
But you have to understand, it’s hard for a woman on a police force, especially if you have kids. You get no street duty, except to give parking tickets. I wanted them to know I was serious that this was my career. So I was taking classes in arson and fraud, I trained for the bomb squad --

CARTER
The bomb squad? That’s bad-ass.

ELIZABETH
(pleased)
I thought so.

CARTER
Much more important than spending time with your kids.
DAVID
Lyndon, your mother had to work. She
was helping to support the family.
(Elizabeth scowls; he
corrects himself)
She was supporting the family.

ELIZABETH
(to Carter)
But you’re right, I wasn’t there for
you, I’ve never forgiven myself.
Never. Finding you ... feels like a
second chance. I’m going to do it all
differently this time, Lyndon --

CARTER
You could start by calling me Carter.

ELIZABETH
(struggling)
I don’t know ... if I can do that --

DAVID
(to Carter)
Can you understand, that name is a
painful reminder of the worst part of
our lives?

CARTER
Can you understand I just had my entire
life ripped out from under me and my
name is all I have left?

There’s a silence as David and Elizabeth look at each other.

ELIZABETH
(quietly)
If that’s what you want ... we’ll call
you Carter.

CARTER
(drily)
Thanks. You’re a peach.

INT. WILSON’S CAR – EVENING/NIGHT

The drive home. Carter sits in the back seat, her head pressed
against the window, with that dazed, Jesse Pinkman-like thousand-
yard-stare: What is happening to my life? She jolts into a
state of awareness as the car bumps up into a driveway and David
announces:
DAVID
This is it.
(turning to Carter)
We’re home.

Off Carter, steeling herself.

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INT. THE WILSON HOME - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Carter steps into the living, but before she can even take in who’s there, her super warm maternal grandparents, JOAN and BUDDY MARSHALL, pounce on her.

JOAN/BUDDY
Lyndonnnnnn!

DAVID
Joan, Buddy, please, back off, she’s not ready --

BUDDY
Hell with that!

Buddy wraps a startled Carter in a giant bear hug. We can see on Carter’s face that this sparks a distant memory.

CARTER
(whispers)
Pop-pop.

BUDDY
Welcome home, baby girl.

JOAN
Buddy, can I get in there?

BUDDY
(releasing Carter)
You remember your Grandma Joan --

Joan hugs her. Under dialogue, Elizabeth’s phone rings.

JOAN
You will after a bowl of my mac ‘n’ cheese, I still make it extra-gooey, just the way you like it.

BUDDY
(re: the phone)
‘Lizabeth, turn that damn thing off!

ELIZABETH
I can’t, Dad.
JOAN
Buddy, she’s trying to catch the kidnapper.

Carter winces, anxiously watching Elizabeth move off to take the call. Now Carter turns to the rest of her family: fraternal twin, TAYLOR, and 12-year-old brother, GRANT. Taylor appears demure, strait-laced, especially in comparison to Carter’s cool grunge. Grant has a detached quality, as if everyone else is part of a behavioral science experiment he’s observing.

CARTER
Hi.

TAYLOR
(an identical inflection)
Hi.

CARTER
(points to Taylor)
Taylor, and --
(turns to Grant, and then to David)
-- do I have a brother?

GRANT
They didn’t mention me? I couldn’t be less shocked.

DAVID
Grant, this has been an emotionally chaotic day, and I would appreciate it if you could keep your sarcasm to a minimum for one night.

CARTER
Obviously, you were born after --

GRANT
Yes. I’m the replacement child.

DAVID
Grant!

GRANT
You said, to a minimum. I think that entitles me to one line.

Carter smiles; she likes this kid. She turns to Taylor. The two girls have weirdly similar behavior; they both stand and silently study each other for a long beat. When they speak, they understand each other’s truncated sentences.
Carter
(I don’t remember you.)
I’m sorry.

Taylor
It’s okay.

Carter
(Do you remember anything?)
Do you --

Taylor
Not really.

Buddy
Last time the two of you were together, you were Little Lyndon and Tiny Taylor. What are we going to call you now?

Under dialogue, Elizabeth re-enters the room.

Carter
Carter. I want to be called Carter.

Joan
(with distaste)
Oh, I don’t know --

Elizabeth
Mom, it’s decided.

Joan
But it’s just so inappropriate --

Elizabeth
(overlapping)
Mom!

Joan
(throws up her hands)
I can’t even have an opinion?

Now David’s phone rings. He looks at the screen.

Elizabeth
Let me guess. Your book agent. We’re not even home an hour and she’s already breathing down your neck.

David clicks the go-to-voicemail button.

David
I’m not going to take it.
CARTER
You write books?

DAVID
Yes, well, so far just a book. But it did pretty well.

GRANT
Should probably tell her what it’s about.

DAVID
Thank you, Grant, I was getting to that.
(to Carter)
Actually, it’s about you. It’s called “Losing Lyndon.”

CARTER
Sounds like I should read it. Right after I finish “Anna Karenina.”

ELIZABETH
Oh, are you reading “Anna Karenina”?

CARTER
No.

JOAN
(to David)
Now I guess you can write the sequel. “Finding ... Carter.”

DAVID
That’s not something we have to talk about right now --

CARTER
Or never. Never works for me.

Off Carter, nonplussed anyone would even think this was okay.

INT. WILSON HOME – GUEST BEDROOM – THE NEXT MORNING

Carter is just waking up in this unfamiliar place. She has slept a picture of her and Lori on the bedside table. She picks up the picture, lays it next to her in bed, looking at it as she holds on to her blanket. There’s a knock on the door.

ELIZABETH (O.S.)
Lynd --
(quickly)
Carter? Are you up?
CARTER
Just a second!

Carter leans over the side of the bed, stuffs the picture into her duffel bag, then shoves it under the bed. Then she lays back down, takes a deep breath, and calls:

CARTER (CONT’D)
Come in.

Elizabeth enters, with a simple tray of toast and orange juice.

ELIZABETH
(re: the tray, a little laugh)
Believe it or not, I gave this a lot of thought. Your grandmother’s out there making omelettes and waffles, but I don’t know what you like, or if you even eat breakfast, and you just don’t seem like a breakfast-in-bed type, so --

She smiles, hoping she’s making some headway with Carter.

CARTER
(dismissive)
This is fine. Thank you.

ELIZABETH
Okay. Good. Well ... I was thinking, maybe you and Taylor could take the car, she could show you around town, introduce you to some of her friends --

CARTER
Or I could just go see the ones I already have.

ELIZABETH
You mean, back where you ...

CARTER
Yes. Back where I know people.

ELIZABETH
What is that, a two-hour drive?
(thinks for a beat)
Sure. I can take you.

CARTER
I’m sixteen. I don’t need my mommy to take me on playdates.
ELIZABETH
I can’t just give you my car.

CARTER
That’s exactly what you offered a minute ago.

ELIZABETH
You and Taylor.

CARTER
In other words, somebody has to be in the car with me.

ELIZABETH
Carter, I’m willing to do whatever it takes to make this relationship work. I just need to know you want that too.

Carter considers this; then:

CARTER
It would help a lot if I believed you trusted me.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ELIZABETH’S CAR - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Carter in the driver’s seat, singing along with “Runaway” by Linkin Park.

CARTER
(singing)
“I wanna run away
Never say goodbye
I wanna know the truth
Instead of wondering why
I wanna know the answers
No more lies
I wanna shut the door
And open up my mind ... ”

INT. WILSON HOME - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

David and Elizabeth huddle.

DAVID
Have you lost your mind? You can’t just let her go on a road trip!

Elizabeth has her phone out; she speed-dials a number.
ELIZABETH
Calm down. I didn’t.
(into phone)
Kyle? The tracker’s on and she should
be passing Denny’s in two minutes.

Elizabeth hangs up.

DAVID
You’re having her followed? That’s
your solution?

ELIZABETH
Do you have a better one?

DAVID
How about just saying no?

ELIZABETH
David, just because I’m a cop doesn’t
mean I always have to be the bad cop.

Off Elizabeth, stalking out.

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EXT. YORK, PA. BOWLARAMA - ABOUT AN HOUR LATER

Carter and Max sit on a hill behind the Bowlarama. They’ve been
there for a while, and Carter is clearly very bummed.

CARTER
You called Khaz? And the girls? What
about Casey?

MAX
She had to work.

CARTER
Really?

MAX
(admitting)
No.
(then)
Carter, you gotta understand, people’re
a little freaked out --

CARTER
You want to talk about freaked out?
Let me tell you about freaked out. Not
only is my mom not my mom, my name is
not even my name, and apparently, my
friends are not really my friends.
MAX
For what it’s worth, you still got me.

He puts a friendly arm around her shoulder. Carter leans her head against him.

CARTER
Thank you.

Max pulls out a joint.

MAX
And I got this.

CARTER
Thank God.

Max lights the joint and hands it to Carter. ANGLE ON: Kyle watching them. As they smoke the joint:

MAX
So these people, your family -- you like them?

CARTER
It’s weird. They’re total strangers, but when the grandfather hugged me, it was like this spot in my brain just went halogen.

MAX
Like a “Bourne Identity” thing. Maybe you’re an assassin.

CARTER
I was abducted when I was three.

MAX
So, probably not an assassin.

CARTER
I have a twin sister who I don’t remember, but I feel like I know her really well. I don’t know ... I could get to like them eventually. Except the mom. I hate the mom. She’s the human equivalent of nails on a chalkboard.

MAX
At least you get to say goodbye to someone.
CARTER
I’m not saying goodbye to you. I never could.

As they hug, Max sees something over Carter’s shoulder.

MAX
That’s uber creepy.

CARTER
What?

MAX
Some guy over there -- he’s watching us in his rear view mirror.

Carter turns; Max points to Kyle’s car.

INT. KYLE’S CAR - CONTINUOUS - CROSSCUT AS NECESSARY

Kyle sees Carter and Max looking at him. He reacts: Shit! and starts his car. Suddenly, Carter notices:

CARTER
He’s got a Virginia license plate.
(she runs towards him, yelling out his license plate numbers)
B! R! 8! Z!
(Kyle drives off)
571! My mom’s a cop! We’ll find you!

MAX
Your mom’s a cop? Probably shouldn’t’ve had that weed.

CARTER
Nah, it’s okay. My other mom’s a felon. She’s the one I take after.

Off Carter and Max, their arms around each other, heading back to her car.

INT. WILSON HOME - KITCHEN - LATER THAT EVENING

Carter enters. Taylor is cleaning up the kitchen after dinner.

CARTER
It’s official. You’re the good daughter.
TAYLOR
Are you hungry? Mom made a plate --

Carter uncovers a dish to reveal a delicious-looking meal.

CARTER
A cop who cooks. She can do it all, huh?

TAYLOR
Actually, I made that. I do most of the cooking around here. Every so often, Grant makes a “soup” --

CARTER
We don’t eat those?

TAYLOR
One had a dollar bill floating in it, so no.

CARTER
(re: the dinner food)
This is fantastic.

TAYLOR
Thanks.

CARTER
I actually ... I like to bake.

TAYLOR
Yeah?

CARTER
A killer chocolate pecan pie. Served hot with vanilla ice cream ... I’m a big fan of dessert.

TAYLOR
Some nights, it’s all I eat. I say I’m going to dinner, and I meet my friend Gabe at this yogurt place --

CARTER
(suddenly very alert)
Self serve, all kinds of toppings? (off Taylor’s nod)
Can we go?

TAYLOR
Soon as you’re done --
CARTER
(instantly)
I’m done.

TAYLOR
I’ll just tell my mom --
  (correcting herself)
-- our mom --
  (correcting herself again)
-- mom --

CARTER
You can have her. She’s all yours.

They crack up. Elizabeth and David enter the kitchen.

DAVID
You’re back!

CARTER
According to the FBI, this is where I live now.

ELIZABETH
Was it fun to see your friends?

CARTER
Yeah, loads o’ fun. I even made a new one. Guy in a dark green Subaru. He sat in his car all day watching me.

TAYLOR
(horrified)
Oh my God! You got his license plate, I hope.

CARTER
As a matter of fact --

She pulls out a piece of paper and hands it to Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH
I’ll look into it.

Elizabeth is uncomfortable; Carter registers this.

CARTER
You can find him, right?
  (lightbulb)
Or maybe you already know who he is.

ELIZABETH
How would I possibly --
CARTER
I know you were nervous, letting me take your car, go off by myself.

ELIZABETH
I was, yes. But it’s not like I had you followed or anything.

CARTER
Just thought I’d ask. ‘Cause if you didn’t, I have a stalker.

A beat -- Elizabeth’s opportunity to tell the truth. Instead:

ELIZABETH
Let’s hope it’s not that serious.
(re: the plate numbers)
I’ll get to the bottom of this.

Taylor picks up her mother’s car keys.

TAYLOR
We’re going to Yo Mama.

DAVID
That’s great. Have fun!

After Carter and Taylor are gone, David turns to Elizabeth. She holds up her hands in a “Don’t say anything” gesture.

ELIZABETH
I know.

DAVID
You just lied to her --

ELIZABETH
(overlapping)
I can’t do what you do, David. Stand back and hope it all works out. I’m trying to reach her. I can’t.
(then, sharply)
Feel free to jump in any time and help me.

INT. YO MAMA (ANOTHER YOGURT SHOP) - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

CLOSE-UP on a tub of gummi bears. Pull back to reveal Carter looking at it, then looking around the shop as if she might actually see ... holy shit, is that Lori? Taylor, unaware that Carter’s brain has left her body, walks up with a cup of yogurt.
TAYLOR  
You’re not getting anything?  
(off Carter’s daze)  
Carter! Are you okay?  

CARTER  
(snapping back to reality)  
Sorry. It’s been a weird day --

Carter sees: Taylor’s yogurt cup is filled with gummi bears.

CARTER (CONT’D)  
-- that’s how you like your yogurt?  

TAYLOR  
I know, it’s lame.

CARTER  
You mean, la-mazing!  

TAYLOR  
Yeah! Can I steal that?

Taylor has put the yogurt on the scale to pay. She immediately turns to ZUBIN, the manager working the cash register.

TAYLOR (CONT’D)  
(re: the yogurt)  
Not this. I’m paying for this.

ZUBIN  
Four twenty five.

As Taylor pays:

CARTER  
(to Zubin)  
Excuse me -- who do I talk to about getting a job here?

ZUBIN  
That would be me, but right now, we’re fully staffed --

CARTER  
Listen --  
(name-checks his tag)  
-- Zubin ... I like that name. Zubin, trust me, you want me to work here. It’s the opportunity of a lifetime.

ZUBIN  
Really? What’s so great about you?
Carter seems like she’s about to tell him, but stops herself.

CARTER
No. I want it to be a surprise when I show up for work tomorrow. Two o’clock sound good?

ZUBIN
Uhhh --

CARTER
Great. See you then.

Carter and Taylor take a seat by the window.

CARTER (CONT’D)
Where’s your friend, Gabe? I thought this was “your place.”

TAYLOR
He’s at a party.

CARTER
He didn’t take you? Nice boyfriend.

TAYLOR
Oh no -- not my boyfriend. I’ve known him since second grade. We just hang out. Play a lot of Sporcle.

CARTER
I don’t know what that is.

TAYLOR
It’s a website, all kinds of quizzes --

CARTER
I’m sorry. I stopped listening at he’s at a party and we’re not.

TAYLOR
I don’t go to a lot of parties. See, my sister was abducted and my mom’s a cop. I don’t exactly fall under the heading of “fun time.”

CARTER
Oh, we have to change that.

Carter pulls Taylor out of the store.
Kids grinding, drinking, smoking, puking -- it’s a pretty fun party. Carter is surrounded by a crowd, watching as she pours bourbon in a bar glass and ignites it with a fireplace wand.

(THIS PIECE OF BUSINESS WILL BE CHANGED.)

CARTER
The trick is, you only want to drink the bourbon --

She tosses back the drink, fire and all.

THE CROWD
Whooaaaaaa!

She slams the glass back down.

CARTER
-- not the fire.

And indeed, there’s still a blaze going inside the glass.

THE CROWD
WHATTTTTTT!
(they burst into applause)

ANGLE ON: Taylor, off in a corner. GABE (not bad, could use some cooler clothes) hands her a drink in a red solo cup.

TAYLOR
What is it?

GABE
Not sure. Something lethal.

TAYLOR
(taking a sip)
I can’t taste the alcohol.

GABE
That’s what makes it lethal.

Gabe keeps looking over at Carter.

TAYLOR
This is fun.

GABE
What?
TAYLOR
Me sitting here while you stare at my sister.

GABE
Was I? Sorry. But you can’t blame me for being intrigued.

TAYLOR
Being abducted has its rewards.

GABE
She tell you what it was like?

TAYLOR
She lived in a two-bedroom apartment in York, Pennsylvania. It wasn’t like she was sold into child slavery.

GABE
You’re happy she’s back, right?

TAYLOR
Yeah, of course I’m happy. I don’t know how happy she is, though.

GABE
She looks pretty happy.

TAYLOR
Gabe, as you can probably tell, because you cannot take your eyes off her, my sister was having a totally fun and awesome life where she got to drink and smoke and probably be a complete slut. While I was standing off in some corner, never doing anything that would remotely qualify as fun or awesome, because I lived in constant fear of the terrible thing that happened to my sister. Except ... it didn’t!

Taylor drains the drink in her red solo cup.

GABE
Whoa, slow down --

Taylor grabs two Jello shots off a tray, gulps them down. She lets her hair down and removes an unnecessary layer of clothing.

GABE (CONT’D)
Taylor! What are you doing?
TAYLOR
Making up for lost time.
Off Taylor, heading for the heart of the party.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WILSON HOME - ABOUT 2 A.M.
A car sits at the curb --

INT. GABE’S CAR - CONTINUOUS
-- Gabe behind the wheel, Carter beside him.

CARTER
Thanks for the ride.

GABE
Yeah, of course, any time. You’re pretty much the most fascinating person I’ve ever met.

CARTER
You need to get out more.

GABE
I’m sure you have a boyfriend. At least one.

CARTER
I had one once. But that was some other life.

He looks at her, intensely drawn to her.

GABE
I really want to kiss you.

CARTER
I can tell.

They lean towards each other; the kiss is tentative, but is about to deepen, but they are unpleasantly interrupted by the sudden glare of a flashlight and a sharp rap on the window.

CARTER (CONT’D)
Owwww. What the hell --

GABE
I think it’s your mom.
CARTER
(hopeful)
My mom?

Gabe opens the door to reveal Elizabeth, with David.

CARTER (CONT’D)
(bumped)
Oh. That mom.
(to Elizabeth, re: flashlight)
This isn’t a coal mine. Could you turn that off?

ELIZABETH
Gabe, is that you?

GABE
Hi, Mrs. Wilson. Mr. Wilson.

ELIZABETH
Do you know what time it is? Where’s Taylor?

CARTER
(a mock gasp, to Gabe)
Oh no, where’s Taylor? We lost Taylor!

ELIZABETH
Really? That’s your idea of a joke?

CARTER
(points to the back seat)
Chill. She’s right there.

Bam, the flashlight goes back on to reveal a drunk, passed out Taylor sprawled face down across the back seat.

ELIZABETH
Oh my God --

DAVID
It’s okay, she’s just drunk.

CARTER
And she may have had a pot brownie.
(beat)
Or two.

DAVID
(to Taylor)
Tay-Tay -- sweetie? Let’s get you inside. Come on. Can you stand up?
David rouses Taylor, and steers her toward the house

DAVID (CONT’D)
I’m going to get her inside. Good night, Gabe.

GABE
Good night, Mr. Wilson.
(to Elizabeth)
Mrs. Wilson.
(to Carter, who is getting out of his car)
Really nice meeting you.

CARTER
Oh, p’shaw. I bet you say that to all the girls who show up thirteen years after they were abducted.

Gabe smiles, and drives off. After he goes, Carter turns and heads for the house. Elizabeth stops her.

ELIZABETH
Obviously I’m happy for you two to get along, but I’d prefer you didn’t pass your bad habits onto Taylor.

CARTER
My bad habits? So, there are already things about me you don’t like. What are they?

ELIZABETH
What I meant was --

CARTER
Just name one. Or you can name one thing about me you do like. Name anything you know about me at all.

ELIZABETH
I want to know you, but you’ve done everything you can to avoid me.

CARTER
Because you’re stiff! You’re humorless. You’re a control freak. You operate from a place of fear. My mother used to tell me every day she loved me. I haven’t heard you say it once, to any member of your family.

Carter turns and walks off, towards the house, completely oblivious to the pain shooting across Elizabeth’s face.
INT. YO MAMA (YOGURT SHOP #2) – THE NEXT DAY

Carter’s first day of work. Zubin has figured out who she is, and he’s juiced she works for him. He sidles up to a customer, showing him a newspaper with Carter on the front page.

ZUBIN
That’s her. She works here. Tell your friends.

Carter smiles, pleased that Zubin is spreading the word.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. YO MAMA (YOGURT SHOP #2) – A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Within no time, Carter is a local celebrity. The place is packed with people who want to meet her. David and Grant enter, watching Carter work the crowd, posing for selfies with fans:

CARTER
I want to be on all your Instagrams. Facebooks. Tweet about me.

GRANT
(to David)
She’s so cool, don’t you think?

DAVID
She is.

Grant heads over to the yogurt bar, and David walks over to Carter, holding out his phone.

DAVID (CONT’D)
What about me? Can I get a picture?

CARTER
Hell, yeah.
(she snaps the picture)
Make that the cover of your next book.

DAVID
I thought you didn’t want me to write about you.

CARTER
I don’t. The j.k. was silent. Next time it won’t be.

DAVID
Give me a chance. I’m slow, but eventually I do catch on.
Carter looks at him, they smile at each other. A nice moment. David heads over to Grant.

**ZUBIN**
(to the crowd at large)
Don’t forget to say where she works!

**CARTER**
That’s right! I want people to know where to find me!

ANGLE ON: Grant, whose face falls when he hears this.

**GRANT**
Oh, crap. I know what she’s doing.

**DAVID**
What’s she doing?

**GRANT**
She’s sending a message to her mother.
(David furrows his brow)
The one who kidnapped her. She’s telling her to meet her here.

**DAVID**
I hope you’re wrong. Still ... we should tell your mom.

Off David and Grant, watching Carter posing for another fan.

**INT. WILSON HOME - ELIZABETH AND DAVID’S BEDROOM - SAME**

Elizabeth and David are getting ready for bed; it’s clear each has their own individual process and there is absolutely no intimacy, tenderness, or even a mild connection involved.

**DAVID**
You think Grant’s onto something?

**ELIZABETH**
I think it’s worth putting the yogurt shop under surveillance.

**DAVID**
If I may make a suggestion ... maybe you shouldn’t be there.

**ELIZABETH**
Of course I’m going to be there. Why wouldn’t I be there?
DAVID
I don’t think it’ll help in your quest to have a relationship with Carter.

ELIZABETH
You say that like you have one.

DAVID
I have a picture with her. (shows her his phone) It’s a step.

ELIZABETH
Okay, well, I would like to arrest the psycho bitch — (with rising emotion) -- who let me die inside ... because I lost my child ... and I could never do anything to help her ... that’s the step I need.

David rushes to Elizabeth, holds her, as she breaks down.

DAVID
Lizzie, it’s okay, it’s okay, you don’t have to be so strong all the time.

Off the two of them, making a long-lost connection.

INT. YO MAMA (YOGURT SHOP #2) - THE NEXT DAY

ANGLE ON: Taylor and Gabe, sitting together like they do this all the time, which they do. Only this time, Taylor is dressed much funkier, much more Carter-like, in ripped denim shorts and wife-beater under a plaid shirt. Carter, at work, is visible in the background, working the cash register.

GABE
I like this new look.

TAYLOR
I felt like I needed to do some renovating. I’m sick of seeing myself as this ... tragic figure.

GABE
Change is good. Long as you don’t go overboard, which you kind of did the other night.

TAYLOR
Yeah, that was rough. But I definitely want to go to more parties, you and me.
GABE
Carter too, right?

Carter walks up.

CARTER
What what? Heard my name.

She brushes back a piece of Gabe’s hair, addresses him with unmistakable fondness.

CARTER (CONT’D)
You talking about me?

GABE
Isn’t everyone? You’re practically a meme.

Taylor recoils, watching the two of them make googly eyes at each other. She is not thrilled.

TAYLOR
What’s going on?

Carter and Gabe break eye contact.

CARTER
(joking)
Nothing now. Thanks, buzzkill.

TAYLOR
You two like each other?

Gabe and Carter look at each other.

CARTER
-- I don’t know --

GABE
-- starting to --

TAYLOR
Since when?

CARTER
What’s with the questions? I already have two moms.

TAYLOR
Great! I’m happy for you! Guess I should have just stayed in my corner!

Taylor races out of the yogurt shop, colliding with a TOTAL HIPSTER in wire-rim flip-up sunglasses and a funky bowler.
CARTER
(to Gabe, re: Taylor)
What was that?

GABE
I have no idea.

At that moment, Zubin summons Carter back to work.

ZUBIN
Breaks over. Back to your post.

Carter returns to work behind the cash register.

CARTER
Can I help the next customer?

A customer puts a cup of yogurt on the scale.

CARTER (CONT’D)
That is a very stylish cup of yogurt. What did you do, layers? I’m a have to try that myself.

The customer pays and moves off.

CARTER (CONT’D)
Who’s next?

CLOSE UP: on a cup of yogurt being placed on the scale. It’s filled to the top with gummi bears.

CARTER (CONT’D)
Here we go, someone after --

Carter looks at the customer. It’s the TOTAL HIPSTER.

LORI.

Carter’s heart stop. Her voice fades.

CARTER (CONT’D)
-- my own heart ...

Carter freezes, unsure what to do. Zubin glares at her.

ZUBIN
Carter?

No response.

ZUBIN (CONT’D)
(to Lori)
I’m sorry, miss, I’ll ring you up --
CARTER
(quickly)
No, I got it.
(to Lori, shaky)
That’ll be four eighty.

Lori hands over a $10 bill. Carter sees she’s written on it:
LOVE YOU MORE.

CARTER (CONT’D)
(whispering)
Not possible.

Lori flips up the shade part of her glasses and locks eyes with Carter.

LORI
(also whispering)
Yes possible.

CARTER
Mom --

Then Carter sees, through the window, two pairs of cops approaching the yogurt shop, guns at their side.

CARTER (CONT’D)
(sharply, to Lori)
Back here.

Carter pulls Lori behind the cash register, and grabs a Yo Mama baseball cap and apron.

CARTER (CONT’D)
Put these on.

As Lori does, Carter pulls a tray of free samples out of a freezer.

CARTER (CONT’D)
Take the free samples, and walk out the front door.

LORI
Carter --

CARTER
They’ll be watching the back.

LORI
I’m sorry.
CARTER
Go now.

ANGLE ON: the front door. Elizabeth enters. Kyle is by her side. Both have their guns drawn.

CARTER (CONT’D)
(to Lori, in an exasperated tone)
Brenda, I know it’s hot, that’s why we need somebody to pass out free samples.
(low, urgent, in Lori’s ear)
Now.

LORI
I’ll be back.

Lori walks toward the front door with the tray of free samples. Right past Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH
(to Carter)
Where is she?

CARTER
Where is who?

ELIZABETH
Carter, this place is surrounded by cops. I promise you, Lori Stevens is not getting away.

ANGLE ON: what Carter sees through the window: Lori handing her tray of free samples to some grateful kids, and then walking quickly, purposefully, down the street, out of sight.

CARTER
Hard to believe you need this many people to catch her. She’s not exactly Lara Croft. The woman can barely throw a Frisbee.
(chokes up a bit)
Though it was fun to watch her try.

ANGLE ON: Gabe going over to Kyle.

GABE
(to Kyle)
Dad. What’s going on?

KYLE
The less you know, okay?
Carter sees Kyle. And recognizes him.

    CARTER
    (to Kyle)
    Hey!
    (to Elizabeth)
    That’s the guy. The one in the green Subaru.

    GABE
    That’s my dad.

    CARTER
    Your dad?
    (realizing, to Elizabeth)
    You lied to me.

    ELIZABETH
    Carter --

    CARTER
    You did have me followed.

    ELIZABETH
    Yes. I’m sorry. I’m very sorry.

Carter’s expression curdles; she can’t believe this is the mom she’s stuck with.

    CARTER
    You’re right. Lori Stephens was here. She risked her life to see me for five seconds, just to tell me she loves me. (bursts out) Because she’s my mother. And you took me away from her. You want to find my abductor? It’s you.

As Carter races out of the yogurt shop, away from Elizabeth, ZOOM OUT. FADE TO BLACK.

    END OF SHOW