

THE FOUNTAIN

by

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EXT. SHENANDOAH - STOCK VIDEO MONTAGE

NEWS FILE FOOTAGE, circa 1987.

Ketner's Grove Main Gate. LOCAL POLICE CARS. STATE POLICE CARS. DETECTIVE SEDANS WITH GRILL STROBES. Their lights flicker across the elaborately ornate wrought iron entrance. A POLICEMAN unspools yellow CRIME SCENE TAPE across the path.

REPORTER #1 (V.O.)  
Twenty years ago the sleepy Coal  
Region town of Shenandoah,  
Pennsylvania received a rude  
awakening when seventh grader Trout  
Ketner went suddenly missing.

VARIOUS MISSING POSTERS on storefronts, lamp posts, trees  
throughout town. NAME: TROUT KETNER. AGE: 13.

REPORTER #2 (V.O.)  
(overlapping)  
Sympathetic citizens from as far  
away as Harrisburg and Philadelphia  
descended upon Shenandoah to help  
with the search - but alas, their  
spirited efforts were in vain, as  
no trace of the boy was ever found  
... until now.

Amusement Park. Groups of teens holding candles, hugging,  
consoling each other around a make-shift shrine.

The forest outside Ketner's Grove. POLICE. DOGS. CIVILIAN  
SEARCH PARTIES. Combing the woods. Flashlight beams dancing  
amongst the trees.

A FLASHLIGHT FLARES across the camera lens. PULL OUT to  
slowly reveal that all of this footage was being viewed on a  
television monitor.

WIDER STILL, as we see that we are INSIDE A MOBILE EDITING  
BAY in the back of a NEWS VAN. A VIDEO TECH works feverishly  
as he assembles the stock footage.

PULLING OUT FURTHER, as we make our way outside, revealing  
that this news van is only one of many ...

EXT. WAREHOUSE COMPOUND - DAY (PRESENT)

A whole slew of MEDIA VEHICLES. Satellite dishes. REPORTERS  
and CAMERAMEN. Everyone active. A sense of excitement in  
the air.

REPORTER #3, addresses her CAMERAMAN, microphone in hand as  
she finishes her report.

REPORTER #3

In what could be the strangest development possible in this twenty year old case, Trout Ketner reportedly reappeared yesterday in as mysterious a manner as he disappeared ...

BLACK & WHITE VIDEO SURVEILLANCE FOOTAGE

Four paned screen. Time code displayed. The footage has that stop-motion effect consistent with a security camera capturing only one frame every second.

REPORTER #1 (V.O.)

.... healthy, unharmed ... and inexplicably  
(the big hook)  
**- still thirteen years old.**

ZOOM and hold on one grainy video pane. SPLIT SCREEN with the image from the Missing Poster. Trout Ketner.

FADE TO BLACK

RISE MUSIC: "HERE I GO AGAIN" BY WHITESNAKE

FADE IN ON:

EXT. KETNER HOME - DAY (1987)

A yellow "four square" home with a stone front porch. The door flies open as two boys rush out. TROUT (13) AND RICHARD AKA: HOPSCOTCH (14). They run down the sidewalk to a waiting school bus.

**SUPER: TWENTY YEARS AGO**

EXT. SHENANDOAH, PA - DAY

This is the "Heartland". The trees are tall. The roads have no stripes. The houses are humble and functional. The people here are workers. They make stuff. Grow stuff. Downtown Main Street is pure Americana ... Mom & Pop businesses, 5 & Dimes, hardware stores, barber shops, etc.

Welcome to Pennsylvania's Coal Region.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

THE SONG BECOMES FILTERED, as if through tinny speakers. Two girls, TRINA KOSLOWSKI & DEB FERGUSON, both 13, wearing "best friends" necklaces. They clumsily share headphones from a Walkman cassette player. Singing along with WHITESNAKE. Big smiles. *Great Song!*

TRINA

These guys are gonna be bigger than  
Toto.

Deb excitedly nods her agreement.

Deeper into the bus ... Trout has himself half out into the aisle. He sits next to SCHMIDTY, also 13.

EVERY KID ON THE BUS (12, 13, & 14 years old) is peering over their seats - rapt with Trout's story. Everyone except for Hopscotch. He's trying desperately to ignore what Trout is saying.

TROUT

... then the inverted triple loop  
feeds the coaster directly into the  
final stage ...

(off the kids' gasps)  
Now you've all gotta keep this  
under your hats ... but I'm  
thinking of having the car come  
completely off the tracks and get  
launched right out into the lake.

PUDDIN'

Like a log flume?

TROUT

Way cooler than a log flume,  
Puddin' ... cuz the splash will be  
ten times bigger since the drop  
will be so much higher.

(off baited breaths)  
I'm thinking as much as two hundred  
feet. *Kersplash!*

(off gasps, "rad!")  
Show me a roller coaster that does  
that.

A slightly geeky older kid. 14. FUNGUS. He sits with Hopscotch ... absentmindedly playing with his Rubik's cube. Notice the mole on his cheek. He isn't buying Trout's idea.

FUNGUS

What keeps the car from sinking?

All the kids on the bus are now focused on Fungus. "A challenge!"

SCHMIDTY

Put a sock in it, Fungus!

TROUT

No ... no ... that's alright. He  
raises an interesting point.

As the debate progresses, they flip their attention back and forth like fans at a tennis match.

FUNGUS

I hafta assume ... the cars will be  
made of steel. Steel sinks.

TROUT

(quick on his feet)  
*Pontoons.* Each car will be  
equipped with its own pontoons.

FUNGUS

It'll completely ruin the  
aerodynamics ...

TROUT

Not so, Fungus. Not so. The  
pontoons deploy *after* the car gets  
shot off the end of the track ...  
*they inflate mid-air* ... and ...  
and ...

HOPSCOTCH

(jumping in)  
... *And* the first time a kid  
drowns, we'll get sued and the park  
will go out of business. Great  
plan, Trout. *Real responsible.*

THWACK! Hopscotch flicks Trout's ear. Trout exaggerates a pained response ... but this doesn't stop him from thinking quickly on his feet.

TROUT

And ... and ...  
(as if it was part of the  
original plan)  
Everyone will wear a life  
preserver. It'll be, like, a  
souvenir you could take home.

The kids are all thrilled. "Great Idea!" They start chanting "Trout! Trout! Trout!" Hopscotch can't believe his ears. *Trumped.* And from the look on his face - this isn't the first time.

INT. DANIEL BOONE MIDDLE SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

A BANNER. Yearbooks! LINES OF KIDS. NERDY YEARBOOK CLUB MEMBERS check off names and hand out the crimson pleather-bound tomes with an embossed Daniel Boone on the cover.

Trout waits patiently. A nervous younger kid appears at his side, tugs his sleeve. FRITZ BRENSINGER. 12.

FRITZ

Trout? Hey do you think ...

(super bashful)

You think you could give me a nickname?

TROUT

It's Brensinger, right?

(off excited nod)

How old are you?

FRITZ

Twelve.

TROUT

You sure you're ready for this?

Once I give you one, it's yours for life. There's no do-overs on nicknames.

Fritz takes a deep breath ... a little nervous about this rite of passage.

FRITZ

I'm ready.

TROUT

Alright ... let me take a look at you.

(scrutinizing)

Mmmhmmmm ....

(and)

Any peculiar habits? Weird hobbies?

FRITZ

When I was nine, I swallowed a quarter...

(remembering, excited)

Oh, and one time I found an arrowhead.

TROUT

(nodding)

Your belly button ... innie or outie?

Fritz start to lift his shirt ...

TROUT (CONT'D)  
Don't show me. Just tell me.

FRITZ  
Inny.

After a few seconds of processing the information ... Trout nods his head. He's got enough.

TROUT  
I'll have something for you by the  
end of lunch.

Fritz takes off toward his FRIENDS. They're all dying to know how it went. "What'd he say?", "No way!", "Awesome!"

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Close on a yearbook in Trout's hands. He deftly flips pages.

WIDER to reveal ... *Trina's body*. Her hands at her side, with Trout hiding behind her pretending his arms are actually hers. A silly kid's sight gag.

The rest of the kids at the table are giggling. Schmidty, Deb & Fungus. Hopscotch tries to ignore the frivolity.

TRINA  
Here we go!  
(reading)  
Seventh graders "*Dream out loud*".

Trout uses his arms to point out the people at the table as Trina reads.

TRINA (CONT'D)  
Deb Ferguson writes: "I see myself becoming an award winning neurological surgeon and a modern woman who has it all - a successful career, a big wedding at St. Patrick's, three kids, a huge house and horses."

They all clap. Schmidty leans toward Deb.

SCHMIDTY  
That's it? You're not gonna cure world hunger?

Trina clears her throat to get everyone's attention back.

TRINA

Hale Schmidt, aka "Schmidty" writes: "I'll be NASCAR rookie of the year and the youngest driver ever to win the Daytona and Indy 500's."

(they clap)

Yours truly. Trina Koslowski. "I dream of finding the perfect love that lasts forever. Like Sean and Madonna. And, since I love animals, I know for sure I'll be a Vet."

Trout quickly drops the yearbook, reveals himself as he and the rest of the gang shower Trina with applause.

Trout flops down in front of his lunch tray. Now Trina is seated squarely between him and Hopscotch.

TRINA (CONT'D)

And our very own Trout Ketner: "I am going to build the coolest roller coaster in the whole world."

They all begin to CLAP. Trout takes a little bow. Trina smiles. She gives him a quick kiss on the cheek ... Trout hams it up.

Hopscotch reacts jealously to the attention being heaped onto Trout. Trina sees this, senses his distress.

TRINA (CONT'D)

And ... let me get to the eighth graders ...

She quickly flips through the yearbook. Finds her page.

TRINA (CONT'D)

Richard Ketner aka "Hopscotch".

She glances at it, caught a little off guard, but reads it aloud anyway.

TRINA (CONT'D)

"I'm going to make a bunch of money so I don't have to work at the park with my brother."

Everyone claps awkwardly ... not quite sure if they should. Trout leans behind Trina, looks to Hopscotch.

TROUT

Fat chance, chief. You're stuck with me.

(beat)



## TROUT (CONT'D)

By the way, I figured out the name  
for the roller coaster. *The*  
*Troutlander.*

Before Hopscotch has a chance to respond. THWACK! Trout flicks his ear in retaliation for the bus incident. Hopscotch jumps back, clutching his ear lobe.

Schmidty and the others are now laughing. Not to be outdone, Hopscotch looks down to his lunch tray, swipes a handful of grub and begins his throwing motion ...

SLOW MOTION: The remains of a mustard-slathered hotdog sail majestically through the air. Globules of condiments languidly strew across the room as the Hebrew National drifts toward its target.

Trout turns slowly ... his jaw dropping as he sees the incoming projectile ...

SMASH CUT TO:

## INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

A TEACHER drags Hopscotch and Trout down the hallway by their collars. She's furious. Both boys are covered in ketchup and mustard ... the remains of an all-out food fight.

## INT. PRINCIPALS OFFICE - DAY

PRINCIPAL FIGLEY. 50. A career educator with the novelty tie collection to prove it. Across from him, MRS. KETNER. Late thirties. She has a sweet face. She pushes a few dozen sets of amusement park tickets across the desk ... enough for the graduating eighth grade class.

## PRINCIPAL FIGLEY

Thank you. I know the eighth graders look forward to this every year ... but I honestly don't know how you can afford it, Mrs. Ketner.

## MRS. KETNER

They'll be going off to high school, then, soon enough, out into the world. These are the best years of their lives. They deserve to have a little fun.

(smiling sadly)

Besides, it was Charlie's favorite tradition. I like to carry it on.

## INT. PRINCIPALS WAITING AREA - DAY

Hopscotch and Trout are giggling. Trout pretends to smear more mustard on Hopscotch's face. He pushes him away playfully. The food fight was more bonding than anything else.

TROUT

Fritz asked for a nick name.

Hopscotch's interest is piqued ...

HOPSCOTCH

Brensinger? That kid who ate the dime?

TROUT

He told me "quarter".

HOPSCOTCH

Quarter? Kid's up to thirty five cents.

TROUT

Yeah. He oughta put a slot in the top of his head ... be easier.

HOPSCOTCH

(sense of discovery)  
Coin slot ...

TROUT

(picking up)  
Coin slot ...

HOPSCOTCH

He an "inny"?

Trout and Hopscotch's faces light up. *They've got it!* Trout makes a move for the PA system microphone. Hopscotch sees, quickly counter maneuvers. It's a battle for the mic. Trout hits the "ALL CALL" button.

## INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A little SCREECH OF FEEDBACK, then Trout's voice.

TROUT (O.S.)

Your attention please ...

Strange GRUNTING SOUNDS interrupt the broadcast periodically ... like a struggle is occurring.

TROUT (O.S.) (CONT'D)

From this day forth, Fritz  
Brensinger will be known only as:

TROUT (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 (big reveal)  
 "Piggy Banks".

THE CAMERA finds Fritz in the classroom. A huge proud smile. A glorious day indeed. He gets high fives from a couple FRIENDS.

FRITZ  
*Perfect.*

INT. PRINCIPALS WAITING AREA - DAY

Trout and Hopscotch continue to struggle for the mic as Mrs. Ketner and Principal Figley exit the office.

MRS. KETNER  
 Boys!

Hopscotch and Trout freeze in a Greco-Roman wrestling pose.

TROUT  
 (softly into microphone)  
 This concludes our broadcast.  
 Trout ...

Trout shoves the microphone in Hopscotch's face. Hopscotch eyes his Mom's scrutinizing stare ... but does it anyway.

HOPSCOTCH  
 And Hopscotch ...

TROUT  
 (big dramatic finish)  
 Signing off!

Trout untangles himself, gets up.

TROUT (CONT'D)  
 Hi, Mom.

Trout kisses her on the cheek as Principal Figley waves him into his office. Mrs. Ketner, eyes Hopscotch, "C'mon ... "

HOPSCOTCH  
 But he started it!

MRS. KETNER  
 And I'm finishing it.  
 (off sullen look)  
 Look, you're the man of the house,  
 Richard. I'm not saying you can't  
 be a kid ... you just need to use  
 better judgement.

Hopscotch is clearly dejected. Mrs. Ketner sits next to him, wraps her arm around his shoulders.

MRS. KETNER (CONT'D)  
 Hey ... chin up.  
     (smiling)  
 I'm making your favorite tonight  
 ... Oreo Pie.

Hopscotch's face falls.

HOPSCOTCH  
 That's *Trout's* favorite.

MRS. KETNER  
 It's only his favorite because it's  
 yours. He looks up to his big  
 brother.

HOPSCOTCH  
 Well, he's got a funny way of  
 showing it.

Hopscotch pulls away from his mom, sulks toward Figley's  
 office.

EXT. KETNERS GROVE MAIN GATE - DAY

We caught a glimpse of this before. But now, in the  
 daylight, this is truly something. Beautiful wrought iron  
 letters spell out "Ketner's Grove", painted in an array of  
 appropriately ornate colors.

We pass through the gate, past ticket booths selling chits  
 and tokens in increments of twenty cents.

EXT. KETNERS GROVE - DAY

THE AMUSEMENT PARK: Everything from Roller Coasters to  
 Teacup rides. Log Flumes and Vomitrons. An antique Merry-Go-  
 Round. Complete with majestic steeds in headdresses.  
 Chariots. Brass rings.

THE PICNIC AREA: Dozens upon dozens of pole buildings.  
 Capable of servicing 20 to 30 family reunions.

THE LAKE: As far as the eye can see. Acres of water.  
 Pontoon rafts off shore. Rope swings on shore.

THE CAMPGROUND: Hundreds of tent sites. Twice as many R.V.  
 sites with barbecue pits and fire rings.

THE FOREST: Measured in square miles. Big enough and lush  
 enough to be it's own wildlife preserve.

EXT. KETNERS GROVE - OUTDOOR ARCADE - DAY

Hopscotch stands at a CLAW GRABBER GAME. Plush Rainbow Brite and Strawberry Shortcake dolls waiting behind the glass. He eyes one of the prizes inside. A PRETTY RING in a little plastic bubble. It's cheap metal, and the gem is not real but, to a 14 year old, it's like *Tiffany's*.

Hopscotch reaches into his pocket, pulls out a couple TOKENS. Fancy brass coins with the Ketner's logo and a Ferris Wheel engraving. A throwback design even in 1987.

Trout appears behind him, sees the object of Hopscotch's attention.

TROUT

A ring!? Who you getting it for?  
Rebecca? Slimberly? Diane?

HOPSCOTCH

(sarcastic)

Actually I'm trying to get the  
Strawberry Shortcake doll for you,  
so you can finish off your  
collection.

TROUT

(wise-ass enthusiasm)

You're, like, the best brother  
ever!

(picking right back up)

Seriously. Who's it for? Franny?  
Holly?

(realizing)

No ... wait ... I got it ... Punky  
Brewster finally answered your love  
letters!

HOPSCOTCH

Funny. *Now get lost.*

Trout scoots off to join Schmidty and Deb.

Hopscotch takes a breath, recommits himself to his task. He takes the first coin and drops it into the slot on the Claw Grabber Game. The TIMER starts 40 seconds ... 39 ... 38 ... Hopscotch works the controls, positions the claw over the ring. He almost has it lined up ...

TRINA

Whatcha doin'?

He turns and sees Trina's smiling face. He's at a loss for words. If there was any doubt about the crush he has on Trina, it is now removed. He gazes at her. Transfixed.

TRINA (CONT'D)  
That's a nice ring. Whoever you  
give it to would probably really  
like it.

It is Hopscotch's moment to capitalize on.

EXT. KETNERS AMUSEMENT PARK (HI-STRIKER) - DAY

Trout, Schmidty & Deb watch two workers erecting a STRONG MAN  
HI-STRIKER game. The hefty one: APE & the skinny one:  
FESTICH. They jokingly talk with Trout like he's an adult  
"boss".

APE  
Look alright to you, Mr. Ketner?

TROUT  
Lookin' good, gents. Lookin' good.  
(then to Schmidty)  
Hey, maybe when I'm working for  
Hopscotch, you and I could run the  
Hi-Striker. That'd be the coolest.

SCHMIDTY  
I don't think I'm gonna have the  
time, Trout. The race circuit is  
gonna have me out of town most of  
the year ...

TROUT  
Yeah. You're right ... It'll suck  
not having you around though.

DEB  
So ... did you tell Trout the big  
news?  
(to Trout)  
Schmidty and I decided to go  
*steady*.

Trout's jaw drops. He acts dizzy ... then faux faints into  
Schmidty's arms. Deb can't help but be amused.

EXT. KETNERS GROVE - OUTDOOR ARCADE - DAY

Trina glances toward the Claw Grabber timer ... 10 ... 9 ...

TRINA  
Better hurry. Time's running out.

Hopscotch turns to the machine ... his hands move to the  
controls ... he's working up the courage ... a little smile  
creeping onto his face.

But then it happens. A SHRIEK OF LAUGHTER. Trina looks Trout's way ... sees his antics ... starts giggling. Hopscotch sees her ... the smile washes off his face.

And in the blink of an eye, Trina is gone. Running to join Trout and the others. The timer ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... 0. The Claw automatically drops, as Hopscotch stares at Trina in the distance.

EXT. KETNERS GROVE LAKE - DAY

Trina catches up with the rest of the gang.

TRINA  
What's going on?

DEB  
We decided to go steady.

TRINA  
*Omigod!* That's so awesome.

DEB  
You guys should be going steady too. You've been dating for longer than me and Schmidty.

Trout freezes in his tracks. Looks to Trina nervously. She smiles shyly. Trout is clearly uncomfortable with the seriousness of the conversation, looks for his "out". He quickly points to something in the distance.

TROUT  
*No way!* Mom bought a hippopotamus!

"Really?!" The girls turn around to see ... NOTHING.

TROUT (CONT'D)  
*Psych!*

Trout and Schmidty instantly take off running the other direction. When the girls realize they were duped ...

DEB  
You guys are so immature!

The girls shriek and tear off after the boys.

EXT. KETNERS FOREST - DAY

As Trout and Schmidty split up. They use basic kid sign language to share their plan: Hide separately - scare the snot out of the girls. Thumbs up! "*Great plan!*"

EXT. KETNERS AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

A wishing fountain. Inscribed around the rim:

"WISH YOUR TROUBLES AWAY".

Hopscotch stares into the ripples in the circulating waters. Coins glistening on the bottom of the majestic fountain. He looks up to see Trina chasing Trout ... she offers a quick glance over her shoulder toward Hopscotch before disappearing into the forest.

TRINA (O.S.)  
(screaming in distance)  
Trout! Trout!

It's like nails on a chalkboard to him. Hopscotch regards the fountain.

HOPSCOTCH  
*Wish your troubles away ...*

He reaches into his pocket, pulls out his last token. He makes his decision and closes his eyes.

EXT. KETNERS AMUSEMENT PARK (HI-STRIKER) - DAY

Ape takes a mighty swing with the mallet ... the striker whizzes up the rail and slams the BELL. Off his self-satisfied smile ...

CARRY RING OUT TO:

EXT. KETNERS FOREST (THE ROCK) - DAY

A pristine shard of unadulterated white shale stands 20 feet tall, jutting out of the earth. Trout hides himself behind the rock, waiting, still breathing heavy from the run.

EXT. KETNERS FOREST (THE TRAIL) - DAY

Trina & Deb creep along the path. They know the boys are out there ... they're a little jumpy. Constantly looking over their shoulders and lunging around wide-trunked trees as they come upon them.

TRINA  
So ... are you in love with  
Schmidty?

DEB  
I guess so ...



TRINA  
How do you know? What does it feel  
like?

DEB  
Don't you love Trout?

TRINA  
I think I do.  
(self-conscious)  
But then I have different feelings  
for somebody else ... so I get  
confused about which is love.

Deb is stunned.

DEB  
Somebody else? Who?

CRACK! A twig breaks underfoot. The girls jump out of their  
skins.

REVEAL: Just a BABY DEER. A little button buck. Maybe a  
year old. The girls edge along deeper down the path. Pulses  
racing.

EXT. KETNERS AMUSEMENT PARK (HI-STRIKER) - DAY

Now Festich gives it a go. He readies the mallet, takes a  
helluva swing, SLAM! The striker screams up the rail ... but  
finishes its ascent in the "WEAKLING" zone.

Festich is undaunted ... readies himself for another try.

EXT. KETNERS AMUSEMENT PARK - FOUNTAIN - DAY

Hopscotch quietly mouths the words to a wish, then ever-so-  
cautiously, flips the token into the fountain.

FOLLOW THE TOKEN as it splashes into the fountain and tumbles  
slowly toward the bottom:

EXT. KETNERS FOREST (THE ROCK) - DAY

Trout waits. Glances at his Swatch. Seconds elapse ... then  
more. He peeks a couple times ... this is getting weird.

Finally ... BRANCHES CRACKING ... someone approaching. He  
crouches low and anticipates.

EXT. KETNERS AMUSEMENT PARK (HI-STRIKER) - DAY

SMASH! THE Mallet SLAMS DOWN! The striker blasts up the rail ... Past "WEAKLING" ... Past "WIMP" ... CLIMBING ... CLIMBING ... THEN BLAM!

The striker knocks the bell right off the top of the tower. SPARKS and shrapnel fly everywhere. KILL SOUND AND:

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. KETNERS FOREST (THE ROCK) - DAY

As Trout launches himself out! HAAH-YEEEEEEE! Screaming like a banshee.

*But nobody is there. No girls - no Schmidty.*

REVEAL: A white tailed MIGHTY BUCK is several paces up the trail. Momentarily stunned into paralysis. Antlers counting twelve, maybe fourteen points. The deer tears off into the forest.

TROUT  
Schmidty?!  
(nothing)  
Trina? Deb?!

As Trout steps out of frame, reveal the rock behind him. It has been transformed into makeshift memorial. Graffiti RIP's, etc. One message in particular stands out: "My first love - Always and Forever". Signed "Trina".

Trout never sees it. Just goes on his way, heading back up the trail whence he came. Shouting out to his friends along the way.

EXT. KETNERS FOREST - SECONDS LATER

Trout comes out the trail head.

TROUT  
(shouting)  
This isn't funny anymore! This  
isn't-

VERRRRRRROOOOOOOM! A HUMMER H2 roars past, completely enshrouded in a "vehicle wrap" multi-colored advertisement for Fierce Wild Berry Gatorade.

His early confusion is now replaced with flat out befuddlement. REVEAL HIS POV:

EXT. MEGALOMART PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS - PRESENT DAY

Where once there was a lake and Ketner's Grove amusement park, now stands a gargantuan cookie-cutter style department store that offers the full shopping experience of households, sporting goods, and electronics.

*And now we know. 1987 is long behind us ...*

IT IS 20 YEARS LATER ... PRESENT DAY.

He moves across the parking lot toward the store. He gets too close to a modern car with SPINNER HUBCAPS still spinning. As he stares at the wheels, amazed ... CHIRP! CHIRP! The car alarm warning practically makes Trout jump out of his skin. He quickens his pace.

EXT. MEGALOMART - CONTINUOUS

Trout arrives at the massive entrance to the building. He shakes his head ... perplexed.

He slowly sticks out his finger and extends it toward the building. Like he's unsure if this is real or a dream. As his finger makes contact with the stucco ...

TROUT

Whoa. Where'd this come from?

CUT TO:

"THE FINDER" TV SHOW OPENING CREDITS - VARIOUS

A reality crime show similar to America's Most Wanted.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

For over a decade, Richard Ketner has dedicated his life to finding lost children. In that time, over a hundred and seventy children have been rescued and returned home.

Various shots of Milk Carton-style missing photographs that are paired with VIDEO FOOTAGE of the child's reunion with his or her parents.

RICHARD KETNER appears on screen. Now 34. Dressed in a casual sports jacket and jeans. Hopscotch all grown up.

RICHARD

(to Camera)

My name is Richard Ketner. If you've lost someone ... I won't give up until I find them.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
(dramatic pause)  
I am the Finder.

His image dissolves to a familiar graphic. Trout's Missing Poster.

CUT TO:

INT. PRODUCTION MOTORHOME - DAY

A mobile satellite uplink facility. Monitors, Editing bays, production equipment and even make-up chairs. A rough edit of the end of an episode plays on a monitor.

RICHARD  
(on monitor)  
... Then later that afternoon, a few miles out of town, the child was spotted in a convenience store by a citizen that had the good sense to call the authorities. The police intervened without incident, and by dinner time, the boy was back home with his family. Safe and sound.

KATHRYN TOWNSEND, a savvy, no-nonsense TV Producer. Cigarette clenched between her teeth. She hits a button to stop the replay as she shakes her head at the screen.

KATHRYN  
(sarcastic)  
I smell a Pulitzer.

The rest of the room is silent. THE CAMERMAN, THE EDITOR AND THE PA all avert their eyes.

Richard has the little hankie trick around his neck to prevent make-up from staining his collar.

RICHARD  
Would you have preferred they didn't find him? Maybe leave him out there an extra forty-eight hours to add more drama?

KATHRYN  
Two days? Of course not. But it wouldn't have broken my heart if he'd at least missed a meal.

RICHARD  
You're such a sentimentalist.

KATHRYN  
 Happy to disappoint.  
     (to P.A.)  
 Coffee me.  
     (to everyone)  
 Let's shoot this sign-off.

The P.A. Takes off scrambling.

INT. MEGALOMART - DAY

A bank of televisions. Dozens of different models. Tuned to a syndicated rerun of a "Finder" episode. Richard interviews the PARENTS of a missing child. Volume muted.

A female employee watches the screens with Richard's show. Her name tag: "Trina Koslowski - Manager - Team Member 12 Years". It's TRINA at 33. Her ordinary uniform and fatigued hair can't hide her natural beauty. A "coulda been" beauty queen ...

HAROLD. 30's. Employee uniform. He sidles up and interrupts her viewing.

HAROLD  
 Boss?

She doesn't hear him. Distracted by the broadcast.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
 Trina?

TRINA  
     (snapping out of it)  
 Harold. Sorry. All finished? You  
 stacked the cooler pyramid?  
     (off nod)  
 Restocked the end rounds in  
 archery?  
     (off nod)  
 OK. I guess you can take your  
 break.

He starts to walk away, then rethinks.

HAROLD  
 You know ... there is *one thing* I  
 forgot.  
     (off look)  
 I forgot to ask you out to dinner  
 tonight.

TRINA

No ... I'm pretty sure I remember  
you asking me that at about two  
o'clock, and then again twenty  
minutes ago ...

HAROLD

Really? Did you say "yes"? I  
forgot.

TRINA

(smiling sweetly)  
Take your break Harold.

Harold shrugs his shoulders, *"Can't blame a guy for trying."*

HAROLD

(good natured)  
When you finally find Mr. Right,  
you gotta bring him around. I'm  
dying to know what a guy like that  
looks like.

Trina laughs ... a little sadness creeping into her laughter  
as she walks away.

INT. MEGALOMART - DAY

Trout wanders through the endless aisles of this gigantic  
store, sees TWO KIDS tear it up on a "Dance Dance Revolution  
Game." Trout's jaw is on the floor ... *"What the heck is  
that thing?"*

Trout backs away nervously ... as he does he runs into a girl  
on her Bluetooth cell phone ear piece. AN ANGRY HIGH SCHOOL  
GIRL.

ANGRY HIGH SCHOOL GIRL

(into "invisible" phone)  
No ... you listen to me!

Trout looks around ... *"Who is this girl talking to?"*

ANGRY HIGH SCHOOL GIRL (CONT'D)

If I ever catch you so much as  
looking my direction I'll slap you  
six ways from Sunday ...

As Trout begins to maneuver away from her, he comes face to  
face with another TEEN GIRL. She has a huge BARBELL NOSE  
RING hanging from her septum.

Trout is aghast, quickly reaches to his own nose. *"Owww!"*  
He starts to back away. As he does, he practically trips  
into another KID playing a new-release video game.

VIDEO KID  
Watch it, pal.

Trout starts to apologize, but sees the game. He's blown away. Just stares at the graphics and "futuristic" appeal of it.

TROUT  
What's that?

VIDEO KID  
What are you? *Amish?*

The dazed Trout finds his way to a grand atrium filled with oversized sporting goods - canoes, tents, R.V.'s, etc.

HAROLD  
You find what you need, sport?

Trout looks up to see Harold, still baffled by all this.

TROUT  
What happened to the merry-go-round?

HAROLD  
Merry-go-round ... I don't think so kid. Maybe at the store in Philly, but not here.

TROUT  
(a little rattled)  
No ... *it was right here.*

Harold sees the concern on Trout's face, leans down and puts a comforting hand on Trout's shoulder.

HAROLD  
You alright, kid?

TROUT  
I don't understand what's going on.

Harold sees Trina in the next aisle.

HAROLD  
Hang on a second, buddy.  
(shouting to next aisle)  
Hey, boss ... you know of any of the stores havin' a merry-go-round?

Trina moves toward his aisle. As she comes around the corner, she sees Trout. She freezes and gasps as she locks eyes with Trout.

Her knees begin to weaken ... *then she promptly FAINTS* ...

Falling into a pyramid display of Coleman coolers which, (with the expected cacophony), tumble everywhere. CUSTOMERS hear the fuss, rush to the scene. Harold is at her side on the floor.

Trout starts to back away. As he does, an older CUSTOMER, sees him. She points at Trout excitedly.

CUSTOMER

Oh my God! It's that *missing boy*!

Most of the crowd wouldn't be old enough to remember Trout in 1987, but that doesn't stop a few of them from fumbling for their camera phones, snapping away. Like an okie paparazzi.

Trout feels the pressure and bolts.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

A COUPLE POLICEMEN. A few holding cells in the back. It's tidy and professional, but it's country. It probably doesn't see a lot of action.

PHONE RING. DEPUTY WALLACE moves for the phone. A familiar mole on his cheek ... it's *Fungus*. Now 33.

WALLACE

Shenandoah Police. Deputy Wallace speaking.

He listens for a while, then his eyes go suddenly wide.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Ma'am. I'm gonna need you to repeat that.

(and)

Slowly this time.

EXT. SHENANDOAH MAIN STREET - DAY

Trout walks down a familiar street, but things have changed. Bartush's 5 & Dime: Going Out of Business sign in the window. An old Train Car Diner: A temporary banner "Now Offering Free WiFi!"

CUT TO:

EXT. PRODUCTION MOTORHOME - DAY

Richard and his small crew are done taping. The P.A. Helps the CAMERMAN pack up the equipment.



Kathryn leans against a black Suburban with a "Finder" logo on the side. Clearly bored out of her mind.

Richard's phone rings.

RICHARD  
Hello ... Oh, hey, buddy ... no,  
it's fine, we just finished taping  
... what's the occasion?  
(listening)  
Say again?  
(beat)  
That's not funny, Wallace. Don't  
joke.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Wallace on the phone. He clicks "Send" on an email.

WALLACE  
You know I wouldn't call you out of  
the blue to joke. Take a look at  
the picture. Tell me what you  
think.

EXT. PRODUCTION MOTORHOME - DAY

Richard opens a media file with one of the pictures from a camera phone at the Megalomart. It's fuzzy ... not enough to convince Richard that it's Trout ... but it's got his attention.

RICHARD  
Where did you get this?

WALLACE (O.S.)  
The question isn't "where" but  
"when".  
(beat)  
It was taken half an hour ago at  
the Megalomart.  
(carefully)  
Trina Koslowski was one of the  
witnesses.

Richard struggles to process all this unexpected information.

RICHARD  
I can be there in about an hour.  
(to Kathryn)  
Let's get this wrapped up. We're  
going to Shenandoah.

Kathryn rolls her eyes. Clearly not pleased with the news.

KATHRYN

*Joy.*

RICHARD

(pointed)

Someone claims to have seen Trout.

KATHRYN

(changing tune)

Well in that case - *joy ... without*  
the venomous sarcasm.

She follows Richard toward the Suburban.

CUT TO:

INT. TRINA'S HOME - SHOWER - LATER

A steady stream of water blasts down on the back of Trina's neck. She stares into space ... processing something ...

She suddenly bursts into laughter ... then just as quickly, chokes up and begins to cry. Confused and emotional.

CUT TO:

EXT. MEGALOMART - DAY

Kathryn and the Cameraman are interviewing several CUSTOMERS outside the entrance. The P.A. is handling photo releases. Kathryn looks giddy. This is getting good.

INT. MEGALOMART - SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

A tiny little office with DVR's and a couple monitors on the desk. A couple dozen prints of the CELL PHONE PICTURES are pinned to the wall. Each as blurry and low quality as the next.

Security Surveillance footage. A frozen image of Trout flickers on one of the screens. Truth be told, if you weren't sure to begin with, the quality of the image is certainly not enough to convince anyone that the kid is actually Trout.

Richard stands next to Wallace. Staring at Harold.

HAROLD

Look. I know what it sounds like,  
but I was *talking* to the kid ... he  
was asking about some merry-go-  
round ... next thing you know,  
Trina's passed out ... and then  
someone said it was Trout.

WALLACE  
Trout Ketner?

HAROLD  
That's what they said.

Richard pulls a family photo from his wallet ... Trout, Hopscotch, young Mrs. Ketner. One of those Sears family portraits - Christmas theme backdrop.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
(examining photo)  
Yeah. That's him.

RICHARD  
This picture was taken over twenty years ago.  
(pointing to monitor)  
You're saying *that kid* ...  
(pointing wallet photo)  
... is *this kid*?

He nods emphatically. Richard is clearly not buying it.

Harold leans in and almost apologetically asks:

HAROLD  
Hey. Think I could get an autograph? My gramma digs your show.

EXT. MEGALOMART PARKING LOT- DAY

Kathryn striding alongside Richard and Wally.

KATHRYN  
OK. Great news! I just got sixteen testimonials from eyewitnesses.

RICHARD  
It's a hoax.

KATHRYN  
You saying they're lying? All of them?

WALLACE  
You strike me as the type that wouldn't care if they were lying.

KATHRYN  
Look, we can't let facts get in the way of a good story. Whether it's true or not, it's *newsworthy* ...  
(beat)

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

It also happens to be our farewell  
to syndicated TV.

(to Richard)

So what we need to do is find this  
kid and stick a camera in his face.  
Pronto!

RICHARD

Show a little heart, Kathryn. It's  
a little kid.

KATHRYN

*Right ... so we'll politely invite  
him to stand in front of the camera  
... then bid our farewell to  
syndicated television.*

*(beat)*

Better?

Richard shakes his head. Not entirely on board. He and  
Wallace blast past her, jump into Wally's police cruiser.

EXT. SHENANDOAH STREETS - DAY

Trout walks down the street. He is distracted by a soft  
CLICK-CLACK NOISE. Growing louder. It's approaching fast.  
Trout looks around, can't find the source ... it sounds like  
skateboard wheels rolling over the seams of a sidewalk.

Suddenly, he turns the corner and is face to face with a  
YOUNG BOY wearing Roller Shoes. He moves toward and past  
Trout without a word. Trout can't figure out what's "weird"  
until he looks down ... the Boy's legs aren't moving - yet he  
*moves along effortlessly.*

Trout's attention is quickly drawn to a Thrift Shop next to  
him. Three mannequins wearing T-shirts. The Window Art:  
VINTAGE TEES! The first mannequin wears "We are the World".  
The second has a "Reggie Bar" logo. And the third is wearing  
a shabby-chic "KETNER'S GROVE" T-SHIRT. The artwork is  
cracked and barely legible. Very curious.

INT. TRINA'S HOME - DAY

Trina sits in her humble home. Her hair still wet from the  
shower. Wallace sits on the couch across from her.

Dead silence.

Richard is at the fireplace, looking through the framed  
photos on the mantle. He picks up a picture of Trout,  
Hopscotch, Trina, Schmidty and Deb as kids at a roller  
skating rink. Everybody laughing. Best years of their  
lives.

WALLACE  
(carefully)  
You have to admit ... it is a  
little farfetched.

Trina stares at Wally in disbelief. This is going nowhere.

WALLACE (CONT'D)  
Have you recently started any new  
medications ... has there been any  
increased stress in your life?  
Anything out of the ordinary?

TRINA  
Look, I know what I saw.

WALLACE  
I'm not trying to be antagonistic--  
She shakes her head. More frustrated than angry.

TRINA  
Well you failed, Fungus. You  
antagonized me. I'm now  
antagonized.

Richard puts the photograph back in its place. Watches Trina  
in the mirror ... then:

RICHARD  
Why don't you give us a minute,  
Wally.

Wally looks relieved to be excused. He walks out the front  
door.

Trina has her face in her hands. Barely holding it together.  
Richard places a hand on her shoulder.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
You OK?

TRINA  
He shows up after twenty years ...  
and here you are after five.  
(exasperated)  
I'm not sure which is more  
confusing.

RICHARD  
It's not like you asked me to stay.

TRINA  
Yeah. And it's not like I forced  
you to leave.

They hang on this for a beat. Richard takes the high road.

RICHARD  
Let's focus on today, for now.  
You're sure it was him?

TRINA  
You believe me, don't you?

She looks up into his eyes. Desperate for a positive response.

RICHARD  
I'd like to but ...

TRINA  
Don't you want it to be true?

Richard can't respond.

TRINA (CONT'D)  
Then what are you doing here?

RICHARD  
Because I have a responsibility to  
look into it.

TRINA  
I hope you're doing it as a brother  
... not just for the ratings.

She stands and leads Richard toward the door.

CUT AHEAD TO:

EXT. TRINA'S HOME - DAY

Trina hugs Wally goodbye.

TRINA  
Sorry, Wally.

He smiles and shakes his head.

WALLACE  
We're all a little rattled ...  
we'll figure out who the boy is and  
where he belongs. Then we'll go  
from there.

Trina and Richard's farewell is *far* more uncomfortable.  
After a beat of hesitation, she leans in and gives him a  
quick perfunctory "air kiss" on his cheek.

EXT. KETNER HOME - DAY

Trout jogs up the steps onto the porch and moves to open the door. It's locked. And from the look on Trout's face, that's an oddity.

Trout digs around in his pockets and produces a Velcro wallet. He pulls a key from within, tries to slide it into the lock, but it doesn't fit.

Trout backs down the stairs ... double checks the address on the mailbox. Very concerning.

EXT. SHENANDOAH STREETS - DAY

Wallace and Richard drive in silence. Richard is a little rattled. Wallace tries to break the ice.

WALLACE

People think they see all sorts of things. There was a lady a few years back ... she swore she saw Amelia Earhart's face in a chicken pot pie. So Trina's not the only one that --

RICHARD

(suddenly)

It's not the first time she's said she's seen him.

Off Wally's confusion ...

RICHARD (CONT'D)

It happened at a super market once ... and then she thought she saw him in the crowd at a baseball game.

(beat)

Every time she and I finally got close, she'd see him somewhere.

But Wallace isn't listening. Richard follows his gaze out the windshield ... SCREECH! The squad car skids to a stop.

Reveal their stunned expressions as they stare out the window.

Their POV: TROUT. Standing in front of "his" house. Just staring at it blankly.

CUT AHEAD TO:

INT. SQUAD CAR - DAY - MOVING

Trout sits in the back seat. Richard adjusts the rear-view mirror. Locks it in on Trout. Wallace takes over. Repositions the mirror so he can see. This goes on, back and forth throughout the scene. Neither one able to believe their eyes.

RICHARD  
You're saying *that* was your house?

TROUT  
I think so.

Richard is a little thrown. Shares a glance with Wallace.

RICHARD  
What's your name?

TROUT  
(absently)  
Trout Ketner.

Richard and Wallace are a little spooked. Share a look to confirm what they just heard.

TROUT (CONT'D)  
You one of Chief Zimmerman's new recruits?

WALLACE  
Zimmerman's retired. Been a few years now.

Trout crinkles his brow. *"That doesn't make sense."*

Richard looks at the food stains all over Trout's clothes.

RICHARD  
What's all over your shirt?

TROUT  
Mostly mustard. I got in a food fight at lunch.  
(then thinking)  
But I didn't start it, though ... my brother did.

Richard's head is spinning. He turns around abruptly to face Trout.

RICHARD  
(a little too gruff)  
Seriously kid. Who put you up to this? Who are you?

Trout doesn't like his aggressive tone.



TROUT

I told you. I'm Trout. Trout  
Ketner.

(long beat)

I think I need to find my Mom and  
Hopscotch. Something's not right  
... everything is weird.

RICHARD

Maybe we can help you find them ...

Wally shoots him a "*what the hell are you doing*" look.  
Richard shrugs his shoulders like he doesn't have many  
choices.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

But we're gonna make a stop first.  
Alright?

TROUT

OK. But I don't want to be late  
for dinner. My Mom's making Oreo  
Pie.

Richard is stunned. "*Oreo pie?*" What the hell is going on  
here?

TROUT (CONT'D)

(confiding)  
It's my favorite.

CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL OFFICE - DUSK

Trout spins himself around on a lab stool as Richard eyes him  
mistrustfully. Trout leaps off his seat, starts browsing  
through the medical instruments. As he reaches out for a  
tool ...

RICHARD

Don't be messin' with that stuff.  
It's expensive.

Trout disregards him, grabs an ILLUMINATING OTOSCOPE and  
flicks it on. He aims it around like a laser pointer then  
directs it toward Richard's face.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Kid ...

Richard makes like he's going to take the item away ... but  
restrains himself.

Trout moves on to his next find, A STETHOSCOPE. He puts it  
on, then listens to his own heartbeat.

TROUT  
(bewildered)  
It really works ...

He begins to speak into the receptor end of the device.

TROUT (CONT'D)  
Testing ... testing one, two,  
three. Mic check. Mic check.

Richard tries to ignore Trout as he discards the stethoscope and moves on to his next point of interest ... a medical TAYLOR HAMMER. Trout plops back down on the spinning lab stool, quickly begins testing the instrument. PLUNK. He whacks his knee and watches as his leg involuntarily kicks in the air. Trout smiles gleefully, then locks eyes with Richard ... slowly rotating the stool a little closer to him.

PLUNK. Trout's leg kicks up again.

Trout smiles deviously, spins a few degrees closer to Richard. PLUNK. His foot flails upward again. He's narrowing in on Richard.

It's impossible for Richard to ignore him any longer. Trout spins another few degrees ... lining himself up with Richard's shin.

RICHARD  
Don't.

TROUT  
I can't help myself ... *it's*  
*involuntary.*

Trout hovers the Taylor Hammer over his knee as Richard braces for the outcome.

RICHARD  
Kid. Don't.

It's a silent standoff ... Trout unwilling to yield, and Richard unwilling to back down.

Then .... PLUNK.

The hammer falls.

The reflex fires.

Trout kicks Richard in the shin.

Richard yelps, leaps to his feet and lunges for the hammer. Trout evades him, leaps up on the table, holding the instrument above his head. Richard, frustrated, makes his move to reclaim the tool ... halfway climbing onto the table to sequester it from Trout.

As Richard grabs the hammer, he comes face to face with Trout. They both freeze ... both instantly awkward ... a weird moment of psychic connection?

A woman in a lab coat arrives. This is DR. DEB FERGUSON, 33.

DEB (33)

Boys!

Reveal Richard and Trout in their Greco-Roman wrestling pose. The hammer held above Trout's head.

Richard is instantly mortified. He retreats and shakes off the eerie feeling, as Trout hands the hammer to Deb.

TROUT

(conspiratorially)

He started it.

Richard opens his mouth to rebut ... then refrains from sinking any further into the childish antics.

RICHARD

(diplomatic, to Deb)

So, what do we know?

Deb motions Richard across the room, away from Trout. Their conversation is in deliberately hushed tones.

DEB

I weighed him. I measured him. I looked at his teeth ... he's a thirteen year old kid that looks, talks and acts exactly like Trout.

(almost exasperated)

If it weren't impossible, I'd say it was him.

RICHARD

How do you explain that?

DEB

It doesn't really fit neatly into any science I'm aware of.

(beat)

If I were religious? I'd say it was a *miracle*.

RICHARD

(a little desperate)

That's the best you got?

DEB

A tongue depressor isn't a crystal ball. They can run the bloodwork over at County ...

DEB (CONT'D)

get some DNA to compare to the  
forensics from the scene ... but  
that's two days minimum.

Richard sits down. Runs his fingers through his hair. In  
the background, Trout continues to spin himself around on the  
lab stool.

RICHARD

(mostly to self)

But that's crazy ... he's, he's a  
little kid ...

DEB

There was a case ... maybe urban  
legend, but in the Appalachians,  
there was a little girl, Caucasian,  
maybe eight, she spoke Mandarin  
Chinese. Exclusively.

(and)

She'd never been out of the town  
let alone the country ... no one  
close to family spoke anything  
other than English ... yet *she*  
spoke Chinese ... there wasn't a  
readily believable explanation. It  
just happened.

RICHARD

Thanks. That's absolutely not  
helpful.

(beat)

I need to talk to Wallace. You  
look after'im for a minute?

(then quietly)

I haven't told him about me.

(off look)

We need to stay objective.

She thinks he's nuts ... but nods agreement nonetheless.

Richard steps out.

EXT. MEDICAL OFFICE - DUSK

Richard walks up to Wallace.

WALLACE

You OK, Richard?

RICHARD

(trying to keep it  
together)

We're gonna need to pull the  
forensic files. So the lab can do  
some sort of cross reference.

Wally doesn't look entirely convinced by Richard's calm demeanor.

WALLACE  
Look. If there's any chance that this could be him, then you gotta tell me what you wanna do.

RICHARD  
It can't be him. Right?

Wallace doesn't have the answer that Richard is fishing for.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
What's going to happen to him?

WALLACE  
I treat the situation like I have a runaway or a lost kid on my hands ... I go with standard procedure.

Off Richard, torn and confused ...

INT. MEDICAL OFFICE - DUSK

Inside, Deb takes off her lab coat - essentially becomes a civilian - and regards Trout like a long lost friend. Her adoring gaze says it all.

DEB  
So you go to school around here?

TROUT  
Yeah. Daniel Boone Middle School.

DEB  
You got a lot of friends?

TROUT  
Sure. Schmidty. Flypaper. Trina. Deb. Puddin'. Chub. Tooterfitz. Chipper. Fungus. Tons of'em.

DEB  
What's Deb like?

TROUT  
She's really nice ... for a girl I guess. She's going steady with my best friend, Schmidty.

DEB  
Steady?

TROUT  
I just found out today.

Deb is floored.

DEB  
Do you know what year it is?

TROUT  
Sure. 1987.

DEB  
Trout, honey ...  
(cautiously)  
... it's not 1987 ... it's 2007.

Trout's face is blank. He starts shaking his head.

TROUT  
Nuh-uh!

Deb starts looking around the office, spies the desk calender.

DEB  
Look. June 3rd, 2007.

She grabs some magazines from the rack in the waiting room.

DEB (CONT'D)  
Look at the dates ... March '07,  
June '07, April '07 ...

She takes a stack of mail and hands it to him.

DEB (CONT'D)  
Look at the postmarks ...

Trout takes a second to process this in his head.

DEB (CONT'D)  
Trout. I'm Deb. I'm Deb Ferguson!  
(rolling now)  
I lived at 347 Mahantango Avenue.  
(with his growing  
curiosity)  
Schmidty and I went steady. I was  
his girlfriend. That was me ...  
I'm *that* Deb.

Trout is trying to digest it.

TROUT  
But you can't be Deb ... you're  
*old*.

DEB  
I'm thirty-three. It's been twenty  
years since I last saw you.  
(beat)

DEB (CONT'D)

But you're still *thirteen* ...  
 (grasping at straws)  
 It's as if time went on without  
 you.

Deb stares at him ... beseeching him to believe her. His wheels are spinning ... trying to make sense of it. Suddenly he smiles. A discovery.

TROUT

So, am I, like, in a time warp?

DEB

(just as confused)  
 I have no idea. All I know is that  
 you're sitting here in front of me  
 with mustard all over your shirt  
 from a food fight that happened  
 twenty years ago.

TROUT

Wow. Have you ever been in a time  
 warp?  
 (off look)  
 This is my first one.

Deb gets a tear in her eye. She grabs Trout and hugs him like a long lost friend. A very tender moment for her.

Trout, however, is already giggling, pushing her away. *She's a girl.*

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

The Finder crew arrives in the motorhome and Suburban. Kathryn leaps out of the Suburban, the P.A. on her heels, taking notes as Kathryn blurts out her demands rapid fire.

KATHRYN

Get me a network executive. *Hell, get all of them!* Let's examine the possibilities of preempting something in prime time. Let's discuss a two part episode. Let's figure out tie-in opportunities.  
 (beat)  
 And find me a coffee that didn't come from a gas station. This could be a long night.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Trout is eating french fries. Notice the fingertips on his right hand are stained with black ink. A standard police fingerprint card is on the desk.

Wally navigates a website on the computer. Trying to search a Missing Person's database. Trout is looking over his shoulder ... fixating with the mole on Wallace's cheek.

Richard is conducting a little Q & A.

RICHARD  
Alright, what's your Principal's name?

TROUT  
Figley.

RICHARD  
First name?

TROUT  
Mister?

RICHARD  
(continuing almost like  
he's not listening)  
And spell your name for me again.

TROUT  
You keep asking like I'm gonna  
change my answer.  
(Richard stares him down)  
Fine - T-R-O-U-T-K-E-T-N-E-R.

RICHARD  
What color is your house?

TROUT  
You saw it. It's kinda yellowish  
... sort of like when you first  
blow your nose in the morning.

RICHARD  
Your bedroom?

Before he has a chance to answer, Kathryn rushes in.  
Cigarette bouncing excitedly from her lips.

KATHRYN  
What's the verdict, boys?

Trout grimaces from the smell of the smoke.

TROUT  
Smoking will stunt your growth.



KATHRYN  
You should talk, short pants.

The jest is lost on Trout.

The computer BEEPS. ON THE SCREEN an alert flashes. "MATCH"  
It's some sort of fingerprint database. Trout's picture  
appears on the screen. Trout sees ...

TROUT  
Hey look. It's me.  
(smiling)  
I'm on TV!

Richard is aghast. Kathryn is beaming. Excitement dancing  
in her eyes.

KATHRYN  
Oh, you're going to be on TV  
alright ...

CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Deb sits alone in her empty office. Eyes the phone.  
Finally, she grabs the local phone book. Finds what she's  
looking for.

She dials. Waits. Then:

DEB  
Hi Hale. It's Deborah Ferg--

CUT TO:

INT. SCHMIDTYS HOUSE - NIGHT

SCHMIDTY (33)  
(cutting her off)  
Deb?

Schmidty. 33 now as well. He's got a little grease on him.  
Wearing a tow truck company uniform.

DEB (O.S.)  
Sorry to call you at home so late.

There is a long pause.

SCHMIDTY  
Long time, Deb.

## INT. MEDICAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Deb is twirling the phone cord in her fingers. Somehow regressed from the professional woman we saw earlier.

DEB

Yeah. Real long.

(and)

So ...

(uncomfortable beat)

Listen. This is gonna sound really strange - and it should, because it is strange - but Trout ... let me phrase it another way, someone who says he's Trout, someone who seems to be Trout ... well, he was in my office an hour ago.

SCHMIDTY (O.S.)

(thrown)

Trout Ketner?

They suffer another long silence. Then:

SCHMIDTY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Well, where the hell is he now?

DEB

The police station with Richard ...

(and)

... but if you're thinking about going down there, I think there's something you should know first.

## INT. SCHMIDTYS HOUSE - NIGHT

Schmidty is stunned by what he's hearing. He goes to place his glass on the table next to him. He misses completely and the glass falls from his hand. Shatters on the floor.

Schmidty doesn't even give a glance.

CUT TO:

## INT. TRINA HOME - NIGHT

Trina in the bathroom mirror. She's applying make-up. Primping her hair. Excited movements.

She steps back and examines herself. Eyes her cleavage, and suddenly has a realization ...

TRINA

He's thirteen, for God's sake!

She quickly does a button ... then thinking, buttons another one. She rushes from the room.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Kathryn is bubbling with excitement.

KATHRYN

OK. Here's the plan.  
(pointing as she calls it  
out)

Little Trout here is gonna come  
with us.

(to Wallace)

You and your little posse, you're  
all gonna keep your mouths shut and  
not talk to *anyone*. Then we are  
going to shoot the mother of all  
exclusives.

(beat)

This is gonna be huge. This is our  
ticket to the big leagues, Richard.  
Prime time, baby!

Wallace is having none of it.

WALLACE

Listen ... I don't know what kind  
of rules you got on your planet,  
but here we do things by the book.  
In the absence of a parent or legal  
guardian, the kid is my  
responsibility ... and I'm not  
about to release him into your  
custody so you can go parade him  
around the country like a circus  
freak.

KATHRYN

Feel free to step in at any time,  
Richard!

But Richard is silent. Still torn.

RICHARD

It can't be him. It's not  
possible.

Wallace shakes his head. Disappointed.

WALLACE

Then we do it by the book.

Kathryn scrambles for a counter argument.

KATHRYN

But this is *news*! You can't get in the way of news! It's a win - win all around. You get a chance to close a twenty year old case and we get the interview of the century.

WALLACE

(firm)

The kid's not going anywhere.

Complete frustration. Kathryn regroups. Starts pep-talking herself. She's not going to let the situation get the best of her.

KATHRYN

OK. OK. This is workable.

(thinking)

Then we do it in here. You don't have rules about that, do you!?

Kathryn claps her hands and shouts "hello" to check for echoes.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

(sizing up room)

The acoustics aren't bad. Lighting is workable. Protocol doesn't prevent that, does it?

Wallace looks to Richard for an answer. Richard nods his head slowly.

WALLACE

(to Richard)

Fine. But I'm only doing this for you.

(to Kathryn)

I'll give you ten minutes with him ... *supervised*.

KATHRYN

Let's call it fifteen.

(to Richard)

We shoot in half an hour.

She skips out of the station, an extra bounce in her step.

INT. POLICE STATION - HOLDING AREA - SECONDS LATER

Wallace leads Trout into a holding cell. It's clean. Lacks any sort of sordid history you usually associate with a place like this. It's Shenandoah for chrissakes.

WALLACE

It's just so you have a place to lie down for a little bit while we sort things out ... you're not in trouble or anything.

Regardless, Trout looks a bit on edge.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Don't worry. I'm not even gonna close the door.

Richard wanders in. Nods to Wallace as he leaves.

RICHARD

I have an important question.

He tries not to sound guilty ...

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Do you know how you got here?

Trout shrugs his shoulders.

TROUT

I went behind the rock ... I came out ...

(thinking)

Just a time warp, I guess. What else could it be?

Richard seems relieved by the answer.

RICHARD

Alright, kid. You try to get some rest.

TROUT

You said you were going to help me find my Mom.

RICHARD

(fumbling, desperate)

That's right ... I forgot to tell you ... I put in a call and it looks like we're going to get that all worked out. OK?

TROUT

When do I get to see her?

Richard is torn ... doesn't know how to respond.

RICHARD

As soon as I get everything figured out.

Richard leaves Trout. Heads out of the holding cell area. Trout watches him go ... then ... ever so softly ... ever so carefully ...

TROUT  
Hopscotch?

Richard stutter steps ... but keeps walking. Leaves Trout behind.

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Kathryn is with her Cameraman as he unloads their equipment. She hears the sound of an approaching vehicle.

REVEAL: A LOCAL NEWS VAN arrives. A REPORTER (#1) jumps out of the van. She cruises toward the police station entrance.

Kathryn takes flight, rushes the Reporter, gets in her way.

KATHRYN  
Good evening. Can I help you?

REPORTER #1  
I was just ...  
(eyeing motorhome)  
I was just checking out a silly  
rumor ...

KATHRYN  
Yeah ... me too.  
(thinking quickly)  
Turns out it was all a hoax.

REPORTER #1  
Is that right?

KATHRYN  
Can you believe it? Two news crews  
dispatched to the middle of  
nowhere. What a waste of our  
professional time.

Reporter #1 glances toward the Cameraman unloading equipment.

REPORTER #1  
But not a complete waste, right?  
(beat)  
Maybe we'll wait it out. See if a  
story crops up.

Kathryn's eyes narrow at the competition, but before she has a chance to respond, she hears a sound approaching.

As she looks up the road, REVEAL: SEVERAL MORE NEWS VANS.  
All arriving at the same time. Kathryn's face drops.

As she rushes to intervene, she passes by Schmidty climbing out of his tow truck. He heads into the station ... nobody paying him any mind.

INT. POLICE STATION STORE ROOM - NIGHT

Wally stands on a ladder, retrieves an evidence box from the back of a high shelf. He blows the dust off the lid, reveals the writing in Sharpie: TROUT KETNER - CASE OPEN.

INT. POLICE STATION - HOLDING AREA - NIGHT

Schmidty and Trout are staring at each other. Schmidty is blown away. It's the first time he's seen him with his own eyes.

SCHMIDTY

This is really a trip, buddy.  
Really. So you're saying you  
didn't go anywhere ... nothing  
happened at all?

TROUT

I hid. I came out. Schmidty ...  
(rethinking)  
... you were gone, Hopscotch ...  
the girls, gone ... the park was  
... gone I guess.  
(beat)  
Can I ask you a question?  
(off nod)  
That guy ... the one from the TV  
show ... *is that Hopscotch?*

Schmidty is confused.

SCHMIDTY

He didn't tell you?

TROUT

(a little hurt)  
He asked me my name, like, fifty  
bazillion times! He hadda know it  
was me. I mean, I'm not the one  
that changed.

Schmidty senses Trout's disappointment.

SCHMIDTY

You gotta cut the guy a little  
slack ... it is just a tiny bit  
hard to believe.

They reflect on this for a second, when suddenly Trout realizes something ...

TROUT

You believe it though, right?

SCHMIDTY

I remember one of the last things I heard you say ... I remember it like it was yesterday - "No way ... Mom bought -"

TROUT & SCHMIDTY

A hippopotamus.

SCHMIDTY

You remember!

TROUT

Yeah. It was this afternoon.

SCHMIDTY

Wow.

(long beat)

You OK?

TROUT

Yeah ... I don't want to sound like a wussy or anything ... but ...

(confessing)

I think I'm kinda a *little* bit scared.

SCHMIDTY

That's not being wussy, buddy. What's happening here ... this is some wild stuff. You got nothing to be ashamed of, being a little scared.

Schmidty wraps an arm around Trout. A comforting "man" hug.

SCHMIDTY (CONT'D)

Don't worry. I won't let anything happen to you.

After a few beats, Trout looks up at him.

TROUT

Nice mustache. Like Magnum P.I.

SCHMIDTY

Pretty cool, huh?

(confiding proudly)

I used to have a goatee.

Trout is truly impressed. Then as something occurs to him:



TROUT  
(flabbergasted)  
Wait a second. Hopscotch is on TV?

SCHMIDTY  
(deadpan)  
There's a lot more channels than  
there used to be.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Trina arrives in her car.

She views the throng of reporters and news vans in front of the station. She carefully exits her vehicle, starts walking toward the door. Trying to remain inconspicuous.

Kathryn sniffs her out first, but it doesn't take long until all the reporters are rushing toward her. Trina quickens her pace, but it's no use, they're like sharks to chum.

KATHRYN  
Hi. Who are you and why should I  
care?

The reporters all begin shouting questions, overlapping:  
"What's your name", "How do you know the child", "Have you  
seen him with your own eyes", etc.

Trina is a little freaked out, rushes toward the door. Wally hurriedly ushers her in, closes the door in the face of the reporters.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - HOLDING AREA - NIGHT

TROUT  
What about you? Deb said you guys  
aren't going steady any more.

SCHMIDTY  
(laughing)  
Steady? I haven't heard that one  
in a while.  
(and)  
But, no. Not anymore. She got  
into a good college, met some guy  
in Med school ... got hitched ...  
then a few years ago she came back  
to town ... alone. Guess it didn't  
work out. I haven't talked to her  
since she's been back ... 'til  
tonight, of course.

TROUT

So you haven't seen her?

Schmidty nods. Maybe a little sad.

SCHMIDTY

She's a doctor. We don't really run in the same circles.

TROUT

Well you should really try to make a point of it ...

(confiding)

*She's got boobs.*

Trout and Schmidty share a laugh. SUDDENLY, all action & laughter with the boys stops as the door opens.

Trout and Schmidty look up.

PRACTICALLY IN SLOW MOTION, Trina comes striding toward them.

Trout's jaw hits the floor. This chick is HOT! He and Schmidty whisper like giddy school kids.

TROUT (CONT'D)

Wow.

SCHMIDTY

Yeah ... I know.

Without a word, she drops her handbag. Tears welling in her eyes. She grabs Trout, pulls him close and hugs him hard. He's pinned against her chest.

TRINA

I always knew you were somewhere out there ... it was like I could feel your heart beating, or hear your voice in my dreams.

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Wally and a pair of Policemen watch through the window as more news vans arrive on the scene. Microphones. Cameras. Satellite dishes.

It's getting unbelievable.

WALLACE

We should consider locking things down.

Off their nods ...

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - HOLDING AREA - NIGHT

Trina's make-up is a little smeared. The tears that caused it aren't quite done. She's trying though.

TRINA

... I woke up ... there were a dozen customers standing over me and you were gone ... I was sure it was a dream ...

She bursts into a laugh ... *"This is CRAZY!"*

TRINA (CONT'D)

But here you are ... look at you.

Wallace enters. He clears his throat, gets their attention. He juts a thumb toward the "outside".

WALLACE

They wanna start taping in five minutes. You're gonna have to clear out.

TRINA

Wally! Did you see those people out there? They're animals ... they don't care about Trout. They just want their story!

WALLACE

I'm fully aware of what they want.

TRINA

I waited twenty years ... we waited twenty years, I'm not gonna leave him now.

WALLACE

He'll be fine. They're gonna talk to him for a few minutes. But I'll be with him. What's the worst that could happen?

TRINA

Oh, I don't know ...

(duh!)

He could disappear for twenty years! I could go into another emotional tailspin and spend ten years trying to repair myself ...

TRINA (CONT'D)

then maybe switch therapists, start the process over ... take another handful of flowers to his memorial, and wonder why, when we had him right in front of us, we didn't give him a big hug and never let him go ... something like that?! Am I getting close to the worst that could be happen?!

Wallace nods. She *does* have a point. But he is torn. Trina takes a deep breath collects herself. Trout is just staring at her.

TRINA (CONT'D)

Look, Wally. I know it's insane ... but I'm asking you ... as a *friend*. Let us walk out of here with Trout ... just for tonight. We'll bring him back in the morning like nothing happened. He's thirteen for chrissakes ... he doesn't belong in here.

Wallace considers. Ponders. An idea slowly starts to form.

WALLACE

You know ... if I had a run-away kid in here, and his parents showed up ... I'd have to release him.

TRINA

Did you listen to a word I said, Wally?

WALLACE

(pushing point)  
I mean, if he said, "hey that's my dad" ...

Everyone stares at him ... not quite following. Wally narrows his gaze on Trout, gives a subtle conspiratorial nod.

Suddenly, Trout gets it.

TROUT

Dad!

He runs to Schmidty and wraps his arms around his waist. Over-acting.

TROUT (CONT'D)

I was soooooooo scared!

Schmidty looks down at him like he's nuts. Trout smiles big, gives him the wink. Schmidty understands instantly. Begins to over-act as well.

SCHMIDTY

And I was soooooo worried! Thank  
God this nice officer found you.

Trina rolls her eyes. This is childish ... even for a  
thirteen year old.

Wally can't help but smile.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Kathryn is leading the P.A. around a growing camp of media.  
Talking, smoking, lighting another cigarette ...

KATHRYN

... experts! How many ways do I  
need to say it. I want every field  
of science to weigh in ... I want  
doctors ... I want physicists ...  
maybe a couple philosophers.

(beat)

And get me a religious guy with his  
own TV show ... think "cross over-  
audience".

The P.A. struggles to keep up with the note taking.

Kathryn sees Richard, starts waving frantically as she  
descends on him. Richard looks like he wants to crawl out of  
his skin.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

(to P.A.)

Find me when we hear from Oprah.

(to Richard)

OK. I worked it all out. These  
guys are only local news outlets  
... possibly the only people in the  
media world that occupy a lower  
spot on the totem pole than us.

(beat)

We do the interview with the kid,  
get the exclusive, then dole out  
snippets to them in waves to keep  
the interest high and the intrigue  
*absolutely maddening*. Then they  
air the teasers, effectively acting  
as an advertising campaign for our  
piece which will air in prime time  
tomorrow.

(conjuring up images)

*"Join us on a special night and  
time for a very special episode of  
... The Finder."*

RICHARD

Then what?

KATHRYN

After that we set up the talk show tour ... the three of us do it all together ... guiding all talking points toward the wonderful success of you, me and the show. If it all plays out the way I think it will, this time next year I'll be working for high-six figures while you finish up your book signing tour from the Times best seller you write about your days as a national hero.

(winks at him)  
How'd I do?

RICHARD

And what is it that you imagine the kid will be doing next year?

KATHRYN

Being the only millionaire in his woodshop class ... *I think he'll be fine.*

(pointed)  
Let's just shoot this thing,  
Richard.

A reporter jumps in on him with a quick question.

REPORTER #2

(to Richard)  
For twenty years your brother has been gone ... was there any point when you gave up hope?

REPORTER #1

(jumping in)  
Did you ever start to accept that maybe the worst had happened?  
(carefully)  
That someone had done the unthinkable.

This hits Richard hard.

RICHARD

I think anyone in my situation would wrestle with that.

REPORTER #1

(quickly)  
So, is it him?

Richard struggles for the answer.

REPORTER #1 (CONT'D)  
Is it really your brother? Trout  
Ketner?

Kathryn is begging him with her eyes. "Say it!"  
Finally ...

RICHARD  
Yes.

The reporters are stunned. As much as they wanted it to be true, they probably assumed in their hearts that it wasn't.  
Even Richard looks surprised that he actually said it.  
Finally someone speaks up.

REPORTER #2  
What was the first thing that went through your mind when you looked in his eyes and realized it was him?

Richard responds almost absentmindedly.

RICHARD  
Guilt ...

Kathryn's jaw drops. "What?" The other Reporters are curious about his response as well. Richard recovers gracefully.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
I felt guilty that I hadn't found him sooner.

Kathryn's eyes light up as she watches Richard own the moment.

KATHRYN  
(privately)  
*Golden boy!*

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

TRINA  
Thanks, Wally. I owe ya one.

Wallace looks to Trout. Trout taps his face, indicating the mole on Wallace's cheek.

TROUT  
Yeah. Thanks, Fungus.

Wallace smiles. Satisfied. He knows he's done the right thing.

As Schmidty makes for the door.

TRINA  
I think you're gonna want the back door.

The door opens. Schmidty steps out. Stops dead. HOLY SHIT!

HIS POV:

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

News Vans. Reporters. There must be a dozen people and three or four satellite dishes out there.

SLAM! The door shuts.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Safe inside again.

Schmidty and Trout look a little shocked.

SCHMIDTY  
Back door sounds good.

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Richard wrestles away from the cameras and reporters ... starts moving toward the police station entrance.

As he pushes past another reporter ...

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE STATION - BACK DOOR - NIGHT

Schmidty, Trina and Trout slip out the door. Check to make sure the coast is clear. As they sneak around the side, they see the news crews following Richard toward the station house door.

Schmidty, Trina and Trout scurry towards the tow truck, jump in.



INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

POUNING ON THE DOOR. Wally looks. It's Richard. He nods a Policeman to the door to let him in. Richard bursts in with Kathryn and the Camerman in close tow.

KATHRYN

We need to do this thing now if we  
want the promo ready for the ten  
o'clock news.

Wally doesn't say a word. A smug look on his face. Kathryn is instantly concerned.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

What? What happened?

Richard rushes back to the cell ... discovers Trout is gone.

RICHARD

Where is he? What did you do with  
him?

WALLACE

He's with people that have *his* best  
interests in mind.

Kathryn is a volcano about to erupt.

KATHRYN

Best interests?!  
(nodding to Richard)  
He's his brother!

WALLACE

(pointed, to Richard)  
Yeah. But he's still just a little  
lost kid.

INT. TOW TRUCK - NIGHT

Schmidty's foot punches the gas.

HEAR THE SQUEAL OF HIS TIRES.

CARRY SQUEAL TO ...

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Kathryn responds to the noise. She rushes to the window.

HER POV: The tow truck disappearing into the dark ... Trout facing out the rear window. "Damn!"

Kathryn grabs the Camerman and heads toward the door.

KATHRYN  
We're on the move, people! Let's  
go. Chop-chop!

She realizes that Richard is lagging behind.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)  
Richard?

Richard flops into a chair. Waves goodbye.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)  
Unbelievable.

She's frustrated but she has work to do. She bolts out the door.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Kathryn plows through the throng of reporters as they shout out questions: "What's happening", "Is he OK", "That was short interview", etc.

KATHRYN  
Everything is fine. The little  
fella is tuckered out. You could  
say it's been a long day for him.  
We're gonna give him a little rest  
... pick up with it later.

As they move toward to the Suburban, Kathryn grabs the keys from the Cameraman and jumps behind the wheel.

As the Suburban peels away from the police station ...

REPORTER #2  
(whispering to cameraman)  
She's lying ...

CAMERAMAN #2  
Yeah I figured that when I saw her  
lips moving.

REPORTER #2  
(nodding)  
Let's load it up.

Cameraman #2 nods his understanding ... they covertly head for their news van.

Another reporter notices this, nudges her cameraman ... they too start to skulk toward their vans. It only takes a second or two, then every news person at the scene is clamoring for their vehicles.

Each news team, one by one, loads up and bolts after her ...  
hot pursuit ... on the trail of Trout and captors.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Richard and Wally in a silent stand off. Finally:

RICHARD

That was a really lousy thing to  
do, Wally.

WALLACE

Lousy to who? Him or you?  
(no response)  
He's your brother, Richard. He  
needs a hug not a prime time  
special.

RICHARD

Where'd they go?

WALLACE

I don't know.

RICHARD

Don't lie to me, Fungus.

WALLACE

I'm serious.  
(beat)  
But I got my ideas ...  
(off look)  
If my brother came back to town  
after being gone for twenty years,  
I'd probably be taking a trip down  
memory lane with him right now.  
Maybe fill him in on what's changed  
around here - what his friends were  
up to, where his family was ...  
(pointed)  
Before someone else does.

Richard eyes the box of evidence Wally retrieved from  
storage. He starts browsing through it, then pulls out an  
old crimson Daniel Boone yearbook. He finds an old picture  
of the gang.

PHOTO: The kids all dressed up for Halloween as the  
characters from the Wizard of Oz. Trout is comically dressed  
as Dorothy, Trina as the Tin Man, Deb as the Scarecrow and  
Schmidty as the Lion. Richard is dressed as The Wizard.

Wally places a set of car keys on the open page.

WALLACE (CONT'D)  
My pick-up's out back ...

The phone starts to ring. Then another line lights up. Soon every line is flashing.

WALLACE (CONT'D)  
You're The Finder ... *go find him.*

Richard regards the keys ... gives Wally a cautious nod ... then takes the yearbook and calmly walks out of the station.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

As the door closes behind him, Richard quickens his pace.

When he glances over his shoulder to ensure he isn't being watched, he starts running in earnest. Jumping into Wally's personal pick-up truck and tearing away from the station.

REVEAL: Wallace watching him from a window. Hopeful smile across his face.

We see him wander back to his desk, answer the phone.

WALLACE  
Shenandoah Police. Deputy Wallace speaking.

CUT TO:

INT. TOW TRUCK - MOVING - NIGHT

Trees and small farms whip by outside. Lit only by headlights and the moon.

Trout instantly gravitates to all the gadgets in the truck.

TRINA  
(to Schmidty)  
Anyone see us?

SCHMIDTY  
Not that I could tell.

TROUT  
(bursting with excitement)  
Who let you drive this? This is awesome.

SCHMIDTY  
It's mine. I own it.

TROUT  
(thoroughly impressed)  
You own a tow truck!?

SCHMIDTY  
(a little bragging)  
I got three of'em. One's a  
wrecker. For towing big trucks.  
Eighteen wheelers.

TROUT  
Three tow trucks!? Sweet!

Trout shoots a nervous glance at Trina who is just staring at him ... soaking him up.

He has a little nervous laugh ...

TROUT (CONT'D)  
Do I have a booger or something?

He starts to wipe at his nose to check. She continues to stare and smile.

INT. KATHRYN'S SUBURBAN - NIGHT

Kathryn drives like a woman possessed. Her Cameraman cowering in the passenger seat. White knuckles.

Kathryn punches the gas. Kicking up gravel as they slide around a bend in the road.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The tow truck screaming along.

Behind it. A set of headlights in pursuit. Beyond, we see a half dozen more. A whole caravan of pursuers.

INT. TOW TRUCK - MOVING - NIGHT

Schmidty looks in the mirror, sees Kathryn's vehicle closing.

SCHMIDTY  
Aw, great!

Trout turns, sees them closing in.

TROUT  
Where are we going?

SCHMIDTY  
I'll figure that out when we  
lose'em.

SCHMIDTY (CONT'D)  
(thinking aloud)  
Is this Creek Run comin' up ...

He doesn't wait for an answer. He throws a switch.

INT. KATHRYN'S SUBURBAN - NIGHT

Up ahead. The lights on the tow truck suddenly disappear.  
The whole truck seems to vanish into the night.

INT. TOW TRUCK - MOVING - NIGHT

PITCH BLACK.

Schmidty's face is lit only from the reflections in his mirror.

Driving on instinct ... the road ahead of him nearly indecipherable.

SCHMIDTY  
Everyone got seatbelts?

Trina nods. Then promptly covers Trout's eyes ...

As they enter a blind turn, the headlights behind them briefly disappear.

While the truck is temporarily obscured ...

SCHMIDTY (CONT'D)  
Hold on!

... as Schmidty cranks the wheel hard, sending them into SQUEALING TURN ... As Schmidty straightens the rig out, he DOWNSHIFTS and YANKS ON THE E BRAKE.

Brush kicks up as they slow substantially, but not enough to keep the rig from SMASHING INTO SOMETHING.

SLAM!

SOUNDS OF BROKEN PLASTIC - GLASS - GROANING METAL.

STOPPED.

Everyone breathing heavy.

SCHMIDTY (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
Everyone OK?

Trout and Trina nod. Shaken but unscathed.

They turn around ... watch as the Suburban and the CARAVAN of media vans blasts past them. Unaware they've been eluded.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The truck isn't as bad as you might think. The air-bags haven't deployed. Slamming headlong into the ditch was probably the worst of it.

But there's still damage.

Schmidty trains his flashlight on the front wheel of the tow truck. It's folded under.

SCHMIDTY  
Broken axle.

TRINA  
Can you fix it?

SCHMIDTY  
Not with a flashlight.  
(looking around)  
We follow this up about half a mile, we can cut across the creek ... aughta put us out behind Ulsh's gas station.

TRINA  
Then what?

SCHMIDTY  
Then we find someplace to hide  
Trout ...  
(beat)  
*Someplace he blends in.*

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - NIGHT

Richard wanders through a humble borough park.

The headlights from the pick-up truck spill across the old equipment.

An old tether ball pole. A creaky see-saw with faded paint. A basketball court with grass growing through the cracks. He watches as a pair of empty swings sway in the night breeze.

Richard climbs back into the pick-up truck and looks down the yearbook lying open on the bench seat.

He regards a photograph of this same park in its heyday on the page, then thumbs deeper into the book to search for more clues.

CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Deb is on the phone, hurriedly packing her medical kit.

DEB

Sure. I know exactly where you are  
... is everyone alright?

EXT. ULSH'S GAS STATION - NIGHT

A little country road station. Closed for the evening.

Schmidty is on his cell phone. Trout and Trina mull about in the background.

SCHMIDTY

Couple scrapes here and there. I  
think Trout's a little rattled from  
the whole experience.

DEB (O.S.)

Give me about ten minutes.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

A HALF DOZEN CITIZENS are standing in front of Wallace. The phone is RINGING OFF THE HOOK.

They all speak in an overlapping frenzy of nonsense.

CITIZEN #1

Where is he now?

CITIZEN #2

Is there any sort of safety risk in  
having him on the loose?

CITIZEN #3

How do we know it's him?

Wally takes it all in. Listens for a beat, then calmly picks up the phone.

WALLACE

Shenandoah Police, Deputy Wallace  
speaking ...



WALLACE (CONT'D)  
 (listening)  
 Yes, I'm aware of the stories  
 circulating ...  
 (listening)  
 No ... as far as I know, it's only  
 him ... where are you calling from,  
 again?  
 (listening)  
*In Florida?*

The Citizens's eyes all bug. This story is getting big.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHENANDOAH MIDDLE SCHOOL - NIGHT

Richard climbs out of the truck in an otherwise empty parking lot. He wanders past the bike racks. Past the plaques on the wall commemorating each graduating class.

He finds the flagpole near the entrance, kneels down and inspects the concrete at the base. Two names etched into the cement when it was poured way back when. Trout. Hopscotch. Richard runs his finger along the grooves of the names.

As he climbs into the truck, he answers his ringing phone.

KATHRYN (O.S.)  
 I lost him.

Richard thumbs through the pages of the yearbook. Suddenly, his eyes light up.

RICHARD  
 I think I know where he is.

KATHRYN (O.S.)  
 Well get your ass in gear. There's  
 no prize for second place.

Richard hangs up, starts the truck and pulls out of the parking lot.

BLAST WITH 80's MUSIC.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: AN OLD PHOTOGRAPH

Young Hopscotch and Trout with medals around their necks and roller skates on their feet. Impossible to tell which is gold or silver but it's clear that Trout is the one hogging the limelight.

INT. ROLLER RINK - NIGHT

The photo shares the wall with countless others from years past in this throw-back venue. Schmidty, Trina, Deb and Trout take it all in.

SCHMIDTY

You aughta feel right at home.

A flood of TEENS comes racing toward them ... all Trout size. They rush toward the rink. For a moment, Trout disappears into the throng ...

This is an excellent place to hide a thirteen year old.

CUT AHEAD TO:

INT. ROLLER RINK - NIGHT

MUSIC: VARIOUS 80'S

Everyone skating. Lots of fun ... everyone is transported back to their youth.

Trina, Schmidty and Deb are the only adults skating on the floor.

A "WHIP" starts forming. Trout cajoles Trina to quicken the pace, chasing the whip's tail. An all out sprint. When they grab hold, they're cruising at a million miles an hour. Trina is screaming with delight.

Trina spies someone on the edge of the rink ... times it perfectly, then releases Trout, sending him careening toward, and into the arms of:

RICHARD!

Surprise, surprise.

Richard has his hands on Trout's shoulders. Just staring at him. Emotions rising inside him.

Trout inspects Richard too ... both of them soaking each other in. Finally, Richard speaks.

RICHARD

Trout.

TROUT

Hopscotch.

Richard is overwhelmed with emotion.

TROUT (CONT'D)  
I was afraid I wasn't going to see  
you again.

RICHARD  
How'd you know it was me ...  
before, at the police station?

Trout locks eyes with him.

TROUT  
Cuz you look just like Dad.

Richard pulls Trout close. Clutches him in his arms. Tears  
forming in his eyes.

Trina watches the emotional exchange from nearby. Clearly  
moved.

Trout finally pulls away, sizes Richard up, inspects his  
shoes.

TROUT (CONT'D)  
Where are your skates?

RICHARD  
I don't really skate anymore.

TROUT  
"Don't skate"! That's a good one.  
C'mon. One song!

Trout grabs Richard's arm, drags him toward the skate rental  
counter, like a kid dragging his father onto the dance floor  
at a wedding.

TROUT (CONT'D)  
It'll be fun.

Richard can't help but smile.

CUT AHEAD TO:

INT. ROLLER RINK - NIGHT

Everyone skating. Richard looks surprisingly skilled ...  
though he does look a little ridiculous in a sports jacket  
and roller skates. The whole gang is having a great time.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
Couples skate. Couples only!

The lights dim. A disco ball casts a thousand dancing lights  
across the rink. A slow song starts ...

MUSIC: WHITESNAKE: "HERE I GO AGAIN"

Trout and Schmidty share a dismissive look.

TROUT  
Slow song ...

SCHMIDTY  
You wanna?

Trout and Schmidty slowly reach their hands toward one another ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 ...

They yank their hands back.

TROUT & SCHMIDTY  
*Psych!*

And the two of them promptly bolt off the floor. Deb shrugs her shoulders, follows suit, leaving Richard and Trina alone in a sea of teen couples.

They look at each other ... maybe a little awkward. Richard finally smiles, extends his arm politely.

RICHARD  
For old times' sake?

Trina cautiously takes his hand, they begin to slow skate.

The emotion and familiarity of the song takes over. Trina tentatively wraps her arms around his waist as they skate.

As they make their first lap they pass Schmidty and Trout acting out DUELING AIR GUITAR POWER CHORDS as the song kicks into gear.

Deb is holding a pen light above her head like a lighter at a rock concert.

WITH RICHARD AND TRINA SKATING:

TRINA  
It's nice to have him back.

RICHARD  
Yeah ... it's sort of like a dream.  
(beat)  
He's back ... you're here ... those  
guys are here ...  
(laughing)  
*We're roller skating for  
chrissakes.*  
(beat)  
It's, it's ...

TRINA  
(smiling)  
It's like stepping back in time.

It's tender ... even if he can't find the words to reciprocate the sentiment.

They continue to skate ... a little closer now. Standing tall amongst the other younger love birds on the floor.

WITH SCHMIDTY, DEB & TROUT:

Trout looks at Trina with dreamy eyes. He turns to Schmidty.

TROUT

She got even prettier.

Schmidty smiles.

TROUT (CONT'D)

I kissed her yesterday after school.

(almost bewildered)

*That lady, right there!* Can you believe that?

The smile falls from Schmidty's face ... he shakes his head, trying to digest it.

TROUT (CONT'D)

What's the matter?

SCHMIDTY

It's just ... when you put it that way, it's a little bit of a mind melter.

(off look)

A lot has happened since ... yesterday.

Schmidty glances to Deb. They share a brief moment of discomfort that Trout picks up on right away.

TROUT

What ever happened with you two?  
You were perfect together, weren't you?

Deb turns away to hide her emotions. Schmidty sees this, turns to Trout and offers a silent nod.

"Yes."

WITH RICHARD AND TRINA SKATING:

The lights rise as the SONG ENDS.

ANNOUNCER

Advanced backward skate. Advanced backward only!

## BLAST WITH UPBEAT ROCK

Richard and Trina turn around just in time to see a couple dozen SKATING TEENS flooding the rink, descending on them like an angry (backwards) mob.

They duck and dodge. Near misses and sound effects. Trina shrieks, half-laugh & half-terrified.

In a hyperbolic act of heroism, Richard sweeps her into his arms, and rescues her from the melee. They fall into a heap next to the rest of the gang, laughing.

Trout addresses everyone frankly.

TROUT

Anyone hungry?

RICHARD

You *just* ate.

SCHMIDTY

Yeah, but that was, like, his first meal in twenty years.

CUT TO:

## EXT. ROLLER RINK - NIGHT

Schmidty and Deb pile into her car. Richard, Trina and Trout are in Wally's pick-up.

As they exit the roller rink parking lot, they cruise past a Greasy Spoon restaurant across the street from the entrance.

We see Kathryn through the window ... she doesn't notice our gang driving away.

## INT. GREASY SPOON - NIGHT

Kathryn and her Cameraman sit in a booth in this country-style diner. She regards the menu with thinly veiled disdain.

Kathryn lights a cigarette, relishes the moment.

She taps an ash into the ashtray and a busboy instantly appears and replaces it with a clean one.

KATHRYN

The only redeeming value of this cow town is that you can smoke in restaurants. Christ, they practically encourage it.

The Cameraman just nods. Waves his hand in front of his face to disperse the smoke.

The WAITRESS appears.

WAITRESS  
And how are we today?

Kathryn opens the menu and points an accusatory finger toward a photograph of what appears to be a stuffed cabbage.

KATHRYN  
Let me ask you a question. What is a Halupkie?

WAITRESS  
It's a cabbage leaf stuffed with seasoned pork and beef with a tom--

KATHRYN  
(disgusted)  
You can stop there, Honey. Does the coffee have any meat in it?

WAITRESS  
Not that I'm aware of ...

Kathryn throws her menu down.

KATHRYN  
Make it two coffees. And whatever he's having.

The Waitress smiles, jots the order down.

Kathryn looks toward a muted TV in the corner. A live news broadcast. A horde of RV's and people on a vigil.

She scrunches her brow ... then a photograph of Trout fills the screen. Kathryn chokes on her own smoke.

She jumps to her feet, drags the Cameraman toward the door.

PUSH INTO THE TV, AS IT FILLS THE FRAME ...

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. MEGALOMART - NIGHT

Reporter #1 addresses the camera. She's live.

REPORTER #1  
... if the rumors about the reappearance of Trout Ketner are strange ...

REPORTER #1 (CONT'D)

then the hundreds upon hundreds of people flocking to the location of his first sighting borders on the absurd. They have descended on this Megalomart in a sort of pilgrimage ... hoping, perhaps, to witness a miracle. To re-inspire hope in their own lives ... to comfort them in their own losses ...

PRE-TAPED INTERVIEW: A MIDDLE AGED WOMAN AND HER HUSBAND.  
She holds a Missing Poster of a YOUNG GIRL, maybe nine.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

... we always hoped for the best,  
that she'd come back one day and  
everything would be fine ... sort  
of like this with the Ketner child  
... you hope, you know. Because  
you want ...  
(starting to cry)  
You just want to know.  
(taking a breath)  
It's the "not knowing" ... that's  
what makes it so hard to move on.

She completely breaks down.

THE CAMERA RISES ... soars above her to reveal the scene  
beyond.

Dozens upon dozens of RV's, station wagons and other everyday vehicles. Hundreds of people milling about. A giant crowd holding vigil in the Megalomart parking lot. Candles. Missing posters of other lost children.

Believers looking for the glimmer of hope that Trout represents.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAIRY QUEEN - NIGHT

A bunch of trays of food on the picnic table outside.  
Everyone present and accounted for, watching Trout devour a hotdog.

TROUT

I don't understand.  
(looking to Deb)  
You got married ... but not to  
Schmidty ... and Trina wasn't your  
maid of honor ... she wasn't even  
invited ...



TROUT (CONT'D)

(beat)

Did you have a fight or something?

DEB

We were friends ... but ...

She shoots a nervous glance toward Trina.

TRINA

Yeah ... but things change. As you grow up you make new friends ... and sometimes you lose some old ones.

TROUT

But you have "best friends" necklaces ... you pierced each other's ears ... you're like sisters.

Trina and Deb share a sad smile.

TRINA

Things change, Trout. People grow apart.

TROUT

But you and Hopscotch are still friends, right? I see the way you look at each other.

TRINA

But that's different. We ...

She catches herself.

Richard is instantly uncomfortable. Trina makes eyes with him, urging him to intervene.

Trout sees this, locks eyes with Richard.

RICHARD

Trout.

(struggling)

Trina and I ... we were ... we were more than friends.

Trout's jaw drops.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

We ... we dated.

TROUT

(quietly)

You dated my girlfriend?

Trout turns to Trina, his mind a little blown ...

TROUT (CONT'D)

Really?

Trina weighs her words carefully.

TRINA

Honey, it was years after you ...  
(struggling)  
You weren't ... here.

Trout is a little floored. He slowly places the remains of his hotdog on the tray in front of him and pushes it away.

TROUT

I think I lost my appetite.

Trina is terribly self-conscious. She looks to Richard but he is distracted. He's eyeing a WOMAN at a nearby table. She's staring at Trout. The WOMAN finally gets up and approaches our table. Richard is instantly wary.

WOMAN

(to Richard)  
You're that fella from TV, aren't ya? The one with the program.

Everyone at the table goes quiet.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Yeah. I watch you all the time ...

Her gaze falls on Trout.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

May I touch him?

RICHARD

OK. We're leaving.

Richard stands, blocks her path to him. He nods to Schmidty who quickly rises, prepares himself for evasive maneuvers. Trina starts gathering the food.

WOMAN

I just wanna touch him ... he's ...  
he's a miracle isn't he? I heard  
the stories ...

The gang rushes to their cars. Richard has Trout under his arm, protective.

The Woman pushes the point, follows them, starting to wrestle with Richard to get a hand on Trout.

Trout is getting scared.

The Woman gets a hold of Trout's shirt ... tearing it as Richard finally wrestles Trout into the truck.

As their vehicles screech out of the parking lot, Trout stares back at the Woman. Shaken.

EXT. MEGALOMART - NIGHT

Kathryn arrives at the scene. Hundreds of people now. Satellite dishes erected. Dozens upon dozens of cars , vans and RV's. It's a tailgate vigil.

KATHRYN

This is going to be the story of the century.

(confiding)

I always knew this is the way it would turn out. I sensed it, you know.

(beat)

Everybody said I should dump Richard, dump the show ... but somehow I knew, eventually, I'd end up here.

CAMERMAN

In the parking lot of a Megalomart, hawking a story about a kid who magically reappears after twenty years?

Kathryn sneers at the Cameraman, but before she has a chance to tear into him, the P.A. Taps her on the shoulder and extends a cell phone toward her.

P.A.

(whispering)

Oprah.

Kathryn grabs the phone and takes a moment to self-affirm.

KATHRYN

(whispering)

*It's all happening ...*

She does a quick yoga breath, then ...

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

Oprah. Kathryn Townsend. What a fortuitous occasion to make your acquaintance.

CUT TO:

## INT. PICK-UP TRUCK - NIGHT

Richard drives the pick-up toward the Megalomart. Deb's car follows. Trina finds the old Daniel Boone yearbook on the floor.

A soft haze of light emanates from the parking lot. Illuminates the summer evening mist. As they round the turn, moving toward the light, the scene becomes evident. The crowd in the parking lot.

TRINA

*Holy ...*

TROUT

*Cow ...*

TRINA

Why can't these people leave him  
be?

RICHARD

If a kid disappears for twenty  
years and suddenly comes back,  
somebody is gonna want to put him  
on TV.

*(carefully)*

It'd be better if it was me and not  
one of them, right?

Trina eyes the crowd of media camps ... *he's right.*

Richard drives past the entrance to the Megalomart ...  
continues down the road.

## EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

Richard pulls the truck off the road ... hides it close to  
the tree line. Deb's car pulls in close behind.

They disembark their vehicles. Trina brings the yearbook  
with her.

## EXT. KETNERS FOREST - NIGHT

Richard and the gang creep through the trees, spying on the  
chaos in the parking lot a few hundred yards away. Richard  
stops.

RICHARD

I'll meet you guys up on the ridge.

SCHMIDTY

Where are you going?

RICHARD  
I'm going to try to buy us a little  
time.

And he's gone, trudging though the darkness toward the  
parking lot.

Schmidty furrows his brow. Suspicious.

DEB  
What's the matter?

SCHMIDTY  
Just wondering if we can trust him.

TROUT  
(incredulous)  
Trust him? He's my brother.

Schmidty gives him a reassuring nod ... but doesn't look  
completely convinced.

EXT. MEGALOMART PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Richard wanders through the maze of campers and people,  
finally finds what he's looking for. The Finder Production  
Motorhome.

KATHRYN  
Richard! Thank God! Please tell  
me you found the kid!

RICHARD  
Listen, Kathryn. I want to do  
this, I do ... but it's  
complicated.

KATHRYN  
*Complicated?!*

Kathryn recovers from her outburst ... shape-shifts into a  
sensitive ally ... anything to get him on board.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)  
Oprah called. Oprah. The wheels  
are in motion. There's no more  
time for games. We need that kid  
and we need him now.

She opens the Motorhome door and "invites" him inside.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)  
Look. Nobody understands your  
dilemma more than I do ... let me  
at least get you up to speed with  
where we're at.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

I think you'll find our take on  
this to be dignified and  
compassionate.

(beat)

I have your back, Richard.

Off his consideration ...

CUT TO:

EXT. KETNERS FOREST - NIGHT

A clearing on the ridge overlooking the Megalomart parking  
lot. The whole gang is sitting around a little campfire that  
Schmidty is tending.

They all watch the spectacle below. Small groups huddled in  
prayer circles. Lighting each other's candles. Singing from  
hymnals.

TRINA

We sat up here the night you  
disappeared.

SCHMIDTY

The cops had the whole area locked  
down ... we had to sneak in around  
the other side of the lake ...

DEB

(nostalgic)  
Hale almost started a forest fire.

SCHMIDTY

I wasn't exactly an Eagle scout.

They all laugh ... then get a little misty eyed.

TROUT

How come you remember so much about  
that day? It was twenty years ago  
for you.

DEB

Everybody remembers everything  
about that day.

SCHMIDTY

It's like our parents ... always  
talking about knowing exactly where  
they were when Kennedy got shot.  
But with us it was even more  
personal, because it wasn't just  
something that happened "out there"  
somewhere ... it was right here at  
home. One of ours.

TRINA

I remember when they dredged the lake.

(somber now)

I don't think I ever cried that much in my life.

TROUT

Why?

SCHMIDTY

(sensitive)

Because they don't dredge a lake looking for someone that's ... well, you know, alive.

TRINA

Everything changed when you went away. Curfews. Everything had to take place in the daylight.

DEB

They even had security guards at the school.

It's pretty heavy to the adults.

Trout gets enough of the point to know it sucks.

TROUT

But that'll all change now, right? Now that I'm back? We could reopen the park and everything can go back to normal.

He is greeted with silence. Nobody wants to ruin the little guy's mood. Finally Schmidty takes a stab.

SCHMIDTY

It's all gone Trout. Just because you're back, they're not gonna tear down the store and put the amusement park back ... that's just not the way stuff works.

Off his look of obvious dismay. A dream being destroyed.

CUT TO:

INT. PRODUCTION TRAILER - NIGHT

Kathryn is all abuzz. She's whipping through printouts of various people and calling them out as she hands them to Richard.

KATHRYN

Herbert Hester. Physicist. He's written three books on time travel. Black holes, white holes, worm holes ... you name it, he's covered it. We'll try to boil his commentary down to three minutes.

(next picture)

Dr. Neil Mussberger from Johns Hopkins. An genetics expert with background in pediatric arrested development - he has an interesting take on the scientific precedence for Trout's case.

(next picture)

Gertrude Edelman. She's a rep from a pharmaceutical group who will weigh in on the practicality and ethics of testing the kid for purposes related to anti-aging studies.

RICHARD

Testing?

KATHRYN

Well, someone is going to want to do it. The kid hasn't aged in twenty years.

RICHARD

Exactly. He's just a kid. He's my little brother.

KATHRYN

Let's keep ourselves grounded here, Richard. Three hours ago you weren't even willing to acknowledge that he was Trout. Now you want to play the over-protective big brother role? Pick a side.

Richard is torn. He's trying to understand his feelings and vocalize them at the same time.

RICHARD

What if we just held off on this for a little while. I'm not saying we ignore the story ... just give the poor kid a little time to adjust.

Kathryn's patience has exhausted itself. No more niceties left in the tank.



KATHRYN

That's an interesting idea, Richard. On one hand, it's the worst idea I've ever heard ... and on the other, it's the worst idea ever spoken by anyone, anywhere, at anytime.

(bursting)

*NEWS* can't be old, Richard ... it's got "*new*" right in the word!

(beat)

Look, I can see you're softening up, so let me try to put this into perspective for you.

(deadpan)

You're a speaking monkey.

Richard is caught off guard.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry to have to say something so direct ... something that could reasonably be construed as being cruel. But it's true. Someone writes words on a piece of paper and you stand in front of a camera in a three-hundred dollar sports coat and read them out loud. Do you have any idea how many millions of people could and would do your job if given the opportunity?! You are entirely, with only one exception - *unexceptional*.

(beat)

But you have that one thing. That one little thing that sets you apart from the rest: *You lost your little brother.*

(beat)

He disappeared. And like a fantastic big brother you decided to try to find him. You hung your little flyers on lampposts, you wrote letters in your cute little kid handwriting to your senator asking for funds to continue the search. And through all of it, you became a tiny little celebrity in a world that adores the famous, regardless of their actual accomplishments. Read my teletype, Richard - you are *only* famous because Trout disappeared.

(beat)

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

Breaking this story is your one and only chance in this life to be great ... to be something more than *Trout's brother*.

Richard processes this.

CUT TO:

EXT. KETNERS FOREST - NIGHT

Trout is cuddled up next to Trina as she flips through the yearbook. She finds a picture of the whole gang circa 1984. She laughs out loud. Deb and Schmidty move in close so they can see the object of her amusement.

DEB

Oh my God!

TRINA

Can you believe how young we were?

SCHMIDTY

Nice perm.

DEB

(laughing)

Nice mullet.

SCHMIDTY

It was *feathered*. That was my style.

The girls burst into fits of laughter. Trout, not feeling nostalgic, flips the pages and finds "Seventh Graders Dream Out Loud".

The laughter subsides as they glance over their words from twenty years past.

TROUT

So none of these things came true.

Trout catches everyone a little off guard.

TROUT (CONT'D)

(to Schmidty)

You didn't become the youngest driver to win at Indy. Did you even race at all?

SCHMIDTY

Priorities change ...

TROUT

(to Deb)

And you're not married with kids  
and horses and a big house ...

DEB

It was a dream, Trout. Maybe that  
was just a little too much to ask  
for ...

EXT. KETNERS FOREST - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Richard nears the campfire. He stops short of joining them.  
Just watches and listens from a distance.

EXT. KETNERS FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Trout reads from the yearbook.

TROUT

"I dream of finding the perfect  
love that lasts forever. Like Sean  
and Madonna. And, since I love  
animals, I know for sure that I'll  
be a Vet."

(at his wit's end)

Did any of that come true?

Trina can't respond. Trout shakes his head, thoroughly  
depressed.

TROUT (CONT'D)

So, I guess I'll never build the  
world's coolest roller coaster.

SCHMIDTY

Hang on a second, Trout. Just  
because those dreams didn't come  
true exactly as we said them  
doesn't mean that yours won't.  
They might just be different than  
you thought. Things change.  
Situations change. Think about it  
... if all our dreams came true  
we'd all be astronauts, rock stars  
and cowboys. But the truth is,  
your dreams change as you do ...

(beat)

I know it's hard to understand ...  
but there was a time in my life  
where I started wanting to be a tow  
truck driver more than anything  
else on earth. That counts as a  
dream too. I wanted to do it  
because I loved doing it.

SCHMIDTY (CONT'D)

From the first time I went out on a run and saw how happy that stranded lady was when she saw me pulling up ... jeez ... I felt like a knight in shining armor for chrissakes. I knew, in that moment, that this was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

(beat)

Life throws you curve balls. You think you're heading down one road toward something ... but before you know it, you're heading in a different direction. Sometimes it's sad, but other times it ends up being the opportunity of a lifetime.

EXT. KETNERS FOREST - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Richard seems moved by Schmidty's words. Contemplative.

EXT. KETNERS FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Schmidty now speaks more to Deb than anyone else now.

SCHMIDTY

I'm still young. We're all still young. And if I wake up one day and have a new dream ... well, I'm gonna chase that one too. I'll chase it until it comes true. But the truth is: not everybody has to be a rock star to be happy.

Deb's attention is glued to Schmidty. Rapt.

TRINA

It's just a part of growing up, Trout.

Trout finds a dog-eared page, flips to the eighth grade section and finds Hopscotch's sentiments.

TROUT

Richard Ketner aka "Hopscotch".  
"I'm going to make a bunch of money so I don't have to work at the park with my brother."

(beat)

Well, at least some dreams come true ...

Trina looks up to find Richard standing a couple yards from the fire. Trout follows her gaze, locks eyes with Richard who looks like he was just accused of the worst crime ever.

RICHARD

Trout ... I was just a kid when I wrote that.

TROUT

It doesn't matter.

Trina pulls Trout close. Rocking him as if he were her own child.

TRINA

I'm so sorry, Trout. It's so unfair. I just wish you could have had the opportunity to find all this out for yourself ... in your own time.

(beat)

If anyone would have had a chance to have their dreams come true, it would have been you.

Richard stares at Trout curled up in Trina's arms. Clearly moved by Trout's despair.

Trout has a sudden realization, a look of consternation wipes across his face.

TROUT

I'm stuck here, aren't I?

The whole gang is stricken with silence and grief. Tears start welling in Trout's eyes.

TROUT (CONT'D)

I want to go home. I just wanna see my mom.

All eyes slowly drift toward Richard.

Trina, Schmidty & Deb stare at him in disbelief ...

Trout tracks their looks. Finds Richard's shameful face.

TROUT (CONT'D)

What?

TRINA

(softly, to Richard)  
You didn't tell him ...

RICHARD

I didn't know how ...

TROUT  
You said you'd help me find her!

TRINA  
Oh, Trout, honey ...

TROUT  
(bursting)  
What?! Why are you looking at me  
like that?!

RICHARD  
She's ... she's gone, Trout.

Trout begins to get it. His face drops. Tears forming in his eyes.

TROUT  
Gone? What do you mean?  
(off looks)  
She died?! She's dead!?

Nobody knows what to say. Richard stands ... starts to approach Trout.

RICHARD  
I'm sorry Trout ... I didn't mean  
for this to be the way you found  
out.

TROUT  
When?  
(bawling)  
When did it happen?

Richard struggles with it ...

TROUT (CONT'D)  
When did she die!?

RICHARD  
(softly)  
Almost eight years ago.

Trout jumps to his feet, maniacally runs away from the scene. The gang is temporarily stunned.

Then Schmidty leads the charge ... the four adults rush into the forest in search of Trout.

CUT TO:

EXT. KETNERS FOREST - NIGHT

Trees whipping by.

Trout. Alone. He runs with reckless abandon. Tears streaming down his face.

He seems to be focused on a destination.

His pace undaunted by the uneven ground and overhanging branches.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - VARIOUS - NIGHT

Richard, Trina, Schmidty and Deb are all split up. Combing the woods for Trout.

Shouting his name as they hustle through the moonlit forest.

CUT TO:

EXT. MEGALOMART - NIGHT

Kathryn is near the edge of the parking lot, away from the chaos. She is finding solace in a private cigarette.

Her ears perk up. Faint noises in the distance. People calling Trout's name.

RICHARD (O.S.)  
(in the far distance)  
Trout!

Kathryn's eyes light up. She throws her cigarette down, runs back and grabs her Camerman. They dash into the forest.

CUT TO:

EXT. KETNERS FOREST (THE ROCK) - NIGHT

Trout stumbles through the trees, arrives at his destination. The Rock. He wanders up to it, takes in the artwork on the surface.

Carefully crafted graffiti illuminated by the moonlight.

Hand painted memorials. "RIP". "Gone but not Forgotten".

His eyes wander across all the messages. He begins to focus on the "signatures". Puddin. Fungus. Fireball. Flypaper. *Piggy Banks*. The names bring a sad smile to his face.

He wipes the tears away ... reads on.

A tender message from Trina: "My first love - Always and Forever".

"See you soon", from Schmidty & Deb.

He comes across a cryptic scrawling from Hopscotch. "I'm sorry."

He furrows his brow ... a very strange sentiment.

Trout rounds the corner of the rock ... to the exact spot he crouched before this whole experience began.

Separate from the rest of the memorials ... a simple message:

*"Trout, come home"*. It's signed "Mom".

Trout's eyes begin to well with tears again. He strokes the letters of her signature ... thoughts racing through his mind.

CUT TO:

EXT. KETNERS FOREST - NIGHT

Richard moves along with urgency. Calling Trout's name the whole time.

As he rounds a curve in the path, he comes face to face with Trina. Each jump from the surprise.

TRINA

You see anything?

RICHARD

No ...

His voice trails off. His attention is distracted.

REVEAL RICHARD'S POV: The Rock. Far off in the distance. Only its peak visible above the tree tops ... catching moonlight and glowing like a lighthouse.

Richard takes Trina's hand and forges through the trees toward it.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEHIND THE ROCK - NIGHT

Trout is balled up. Sobbing. Directly below the message left for him by his mother.

He rocks back and forth ... wishing aloud ...



TROUT  
I just want to go back ... I just  
want to see my mom ... I just want  
to go home ...

Over and over. With each iteration, his pulse quickens and  
his tears flow more freely.

TROUT (CONT'D)  
I just want to go back ...

Then he stops.

As if he heard something.

He waits ... waits ...

He hears a CRACK! A branch breaking under foot ...

His breathing quickens ...

Trout creeps out from behind the rock.

REVEAL HIS POV:

PITCH BLACK.

NOTHING.

UNTIL A BLINDING LIGHT flares to life, filling the frame.

Trout's face is blue-white and shadowless.

He's squinting.

TROUT (CONT'D)  
Hello?

Trout begins to move toward the light ... hands outstretched  
...

The light begins to move ... then speaks ...

VOICE  
Trout?

Trout begins to smile ... the voice is familiar somehow ...  
female ... nurturing ...

TROUT  
Mom?

VOICE  
Trout Ketner?

Something changes in Trout's face ... something is wrong. He  
begins to backpedal slowly ...

KATHRYN  
Trout. Is that you?

*It's Kathryn's voice.*

Kathryn steps in front of the light ... it's mounted on the TV camera. She extends a microphone in Trout's face.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)  
I've been looking all over for you  
little man.

Trout quickens his backward steps, trips over a snag in the thicket ... falls ...

TROUT SCREAMS IN EARNEST.

It echoes through the forest.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - VARIOUS - NIGHT

In separate parts of the forest, Schmidty and Deb react to Trout's scream in the distance.

CUT TO:

EXT. KETNERS FOREST (THE ROCK) - NIGHT

Kathryn is practically on top of Trout now, the camera hovering just behind her.

Richard appears, swiftly intervenes.

He knocks the camera off the Cameraman's shoulder, reaches down and sweeps Trout into his arms.

He starts running from the scene, dragging Trina in tow.

Kathryn is stunned.

KATHRYN  
Richard! Are you insane!? This is  
your chance! This is your chance  
to finally do something great!

The Cameraman has his camera back on his shoulder. He and Kathryn give chase.

CUT TO:

## EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

Richard, Trout and Trina run out of the tree line. Rush toward Wally's Pick-up. They jump in, and tear out of the tall grass, fishtailing onto the road.

Kathryn and the Cameraman break the edge of the forest in time to see them flee. Without a word, they take off toward the Megalomart parking lot.

## EXT. MEGALOMART - NIGHT

Reporter #2 looks up as she hears the SQUEAL OF TIRES AND A REVVING ENGINE.

She sees Wally's pick-up flying past the Megalomart entrance. Too far away to see the passengers inside ... but it's making her curious.

After a few seconds, Kathryn appears. Running full tilt. She and the Cameraman jump into their Suburban and fire it off. She shouts orders to the P.A. as they tear away. "Let's go!" "Follow us!" etc. The rest of the crew scrambles into the motorhome.

Reporter #2 shares a look with her cameraman ... no words are necessary. They spring to action, jumping into their news van and giving chase.

The exit sparks a chain reaction. First, one, then another news crew watch the hasty departure and "get it".

As other news vans begin to join the chase, the folks on pilgrimage begin to notice. Rumors fly through the masses ... WHISPERS AND MURMURS.

Soon, RV's, station wagons and all the other vehicles in the parking lot are flooding toward the exit.

A convoy.

CUT TO:

## INT. PICK-UP TRUCK - MOVING - NIGHT

Richard is cruising down the dark tree-lined road.

Trout is curled up on Trina's lap. Nearing sleep. This kid has had a rough day.

TRINA

You OK, honey?

TROUT

I'm really tired ...

RICHARD

Why don't you try to get some rest.

(beat)

I'm sorry, Trout. This turned out to be a really lousy day for you.

TROUT

It's OK.

(beat)

I forgive you for dating my girlfriend too. I understand now. Everything is complicated.

Trout is almost asleep.

TROUT (CONT'D)

That ring you were trying to get ... it was for her, wasn't it?

RICHARD

What ring?

TROUT

The one from the Claw Grabber.

(smiling sleepily)

I said you were getting for Punky Brewster ...

RICHARD

(remembering)

Oh ... yeah ...

TROUT

But you were really trying to get it for Trina, weren't you.

RICHARD

Yeah ...

TROUT

You ever give it to her?

RICHARD

Things like that weren't quite as important after you went away.

Tears are streaming down Trina's face.

TROUT

That's a shame. You kinda make a cute couple.

And he's asleep. It's been a really long day.

RICHARD

Goodnight, Trout.

Trina continues to cry quietly. She strokes his hair tenderly. Staring down at his angelic face.

TRINA  
Look at him. He's perfect. Just  
like I remember.

She takes a deep breath, turns to Richard.

TRINA (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry for the way I treated  
you.

RICHARD  
You don't need to apologize.

TRINA  
No. I do. If I don't, I'll just  
keep doing it again and again for  
the rest of my life.  
(beat)  
I pushed you away.  
(beat)  
I was just so afraid of the idea of  
having something so *perfect*  
disappear again ... I was scared,  
Richard ... and I used it as an  
excuse ...  
(finally owning it)  
I used *him* as an excuse.

Richard stops at an intersection, turns on the right turn  
signal.

RICHARD  
Maybe I did too.

Richard looks down the road to the right. A sign:  
"Shenandoah 3 Miles". He looks the opposite direction ... a  
winding forest road into the middle of nowhere. No street  
lights. No signs.

TRINA  
And now it's too late, isn't it?

He looks into Trina's eyes.

RICHARD  
We're still young ...

Richard changes the turn signal, swings the truck out onto  
the road to the left. The opposite direction from what he  
had planned.

He places his hand on hers. As he does, Trout jostles in his  
sleep, reaching his hand up and wrapping his fingers around  
Richard and Trina's clasped hands.

The boy who had effectively kept them apart all these years  
... now holding them together.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The pick-up blasts by us. Cruising toward destination  
unknown.

After a few beats, another set of headlights appears in the  
distance.

Kathryn is on their trail.

CUT TO:

EXT. KETNERS FOREST - NIGHT

Schmidty reaches a clearing high above the parking lot.  
Watches as the vehicles flood out the driveway.

Deb appears behind him.

DEB  
(eyeing exodus)  
Is he gone?

Schmidty smiles.

SCHMIDTY  
Guess so.

They both smile sadly ... watch the last vehicles file out of  
the parking lot.

DEB  
Kind of a strange day ...

SCHMIDTY  
Yeah. But all in all ... not a bad  
one. Got to see my best buddy  
after twenty years ...  
(beat)  
And you. After seven.

DEB  
Seven and a half ...

They stand silently. Not uncomfortable at all.

SCHMIDTY  
You know ... in about forty  
minutes, this is gonna be a great  
spot to watch the sunrise.

Before she has a chance to respond, he takes off his jacket and drapes it over her shoulders.

They find a fallen tree ... sit shoulder to shoulder.

DEB  
Sorry I didn't call you when I came  
back to town.

SCHMIDTY  
We're sitting here now aren't we?

Schmidty starts laughing to himself.

DEB  
What?

SCHMIDTY  
Nothing ...

DEB  
Hale!

SCHMIDTY  
I was just remembering ... a couple  
years back, it crossed my mind ...  
(half embarrassed)  
... I was gonna let the air outa  
one of your tires ... you know, so  
you'd hafta call me.

Deb laughs now too.

DEB  
Why didn't you?

SCHMIDTY  
Thought you'd find me out.  
(beat)  
Plus ... you always had a way of  
figuring stuff out on your own.  
(beat)  
Probably wouldn't need me.

She gets a little dreamy-eyed.

DEB  
Something tells me you might be  
exactly what I need.

Without a word, Schmidty pulls out his tow company business card ... it's a cute die-cut in the shape of a tow truck. He places it in her hand.

SCHMIDTY  
For when you're sure.

She regards it like a Valentine. Off her smile:

CUT TO:

EXT. WAREHOUSE COMPOUND- DAWN

Richard stops outside the chain link fence surrounding the compound. He jumps out, punches in a gate code.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAWN

Richard pulls to a stop outside a giant industrial roll-up door to one of the units. The chain link fence automatically closes in the background.

Richard climbs out of the truck, stretches, and turns to see the sun rising over the dense forest.

A smile. Then a look of resolve.

He turns to Trina and nods.

Trina gently wakes Trout.

TRINA

We're here, honey.

Trout rises, rubs the sleep from his eyes.

Richard looks to him with mischievous glee.

It's a nondescript warehouse. An unimpressive steel door. Trout is not exactly swept off his feet.

TROUT

Where are we?

Without a word, Richard opens the door. Motions for Trout and Trina to follow him into:

INT. WAREHOUSE "OFFICE" - CONTINUOUS

This looks like the Ketners Park owner's office. A big oak desk. A few filing cabinets, but mostly history. Lore. Old photographs of the park through its birth, evolution.

Trout wanders through the room.

Sepia toned prints of the first roller coaster.

A framed Ticket Stub. The first tendered. Cost a nickel.



An old photo with Charlie, Mrs. Ketner, a three year old Trout, and Hopscotch/Richard as a four year old. Behind them, the park entrance ... the gate ... Ketner's Grove.

Trout regards the picture with awe and nostalgia beyond his years.

Trina is spellbound.

TRINA

This is unbelievable ...

RICHARD

This is *nothin'* ...

Richard opens a desk drawer, pulls out a small FELT BOX, like a jewelry case. He puts it in his pocket, heads toward another door.

Trout and Trina follow.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAWN

PITCH BLACK DARK.

Richard manhandles an industrial breaker switch.

THE BUZZ of dozens of light banks warming up.

As Trout's eyes begin to adjust ... he is instantly dumbstruck.

REVEAL HIS POV:

A HUGE WAREHOUSE.

Maybe 25,000 square feet.

As the lights slowly intensify, we see the contents of the space.

TROUT

Oh my God! You saved it!

AMUSEMENT PARK RIDES.

Not just a few ... Every ride we saw at Ketner's Grove when it was still running.

Some in pieces.

Some in crates.

But we get the idea. It's the whole freaking park!

Trout runs through the half-erected ENTRANCE GATE FROM THE PARK. Practically dances amongst the rides.

Richard follows. Trina at his side.

TRINA

How did you get all this?

RICHARD

We sold the park before we went completely bankrupt. Since the developers didn't want anything to do with this stuff ... I used the profits to buy it all back from them ... pretty much everything.

TRINA

But why? What are you going to do with all of it?

RICHARD

Same as I've been doing all these years, I guess. Like an old photo album. You just open it up and take a look every once in a while.

Trina smiles at the sentiment.

Trout finds a bank of Skee-Ball machines, begins rolling the wooden balls up the ramp. Scoring effortlessly ... like he'd been doing it his whole life.

Then something catches Trout's eye ... something on the wall. A drawing - maybe a diagram.

It's unfamiliar to Trout, whatever it is.

Trout stands and starts to scrutinize it. He is truly awed.

And we now see why.

The entire wall ... bridging across the corner onto the adjoining wall. A complex DIAGRAM of a fantastical ROLLER COASTER.

It's astonishing. The mural stretches a hundred feet wide and all the way to the ceiling. You'd need a ladder to see all the details.

Loops upon loops.

A corkscrew section that shoots up the wall, up to ceiling, and back again.

Tunnels.

A pass through water.

A giant vertical climb and the tallest steepest descent you've ever scene.

It's a life's work.

Trout looks at the patrons standing in line ... each one wearing a life preserver with the KETNER'S LOGO on it.

*"He remembered!"*

Trout traces his hand along the route of the coaster all the way to the phenomenal ending ... the coaster car gets shot off the end of the track ... pontoons inflate mid-air ... and KERSPLASH! The car lands in the lake.

Little tug boats guide the floating cars back to the ride's starting point.

A huge neon sign: "The Troutlander".

TROUT

It's incredible! It's the coolest roller coaster I've ever seen.

RICHARD

I only designed it to be safe and responsible ... it's *your* coaster.

TROUT

You're like the best brother ever!

Richard's enthusiasm washes away. Rubs his brow. Not psyched at all.

RICHARD

The worst.

TROUT

What?

RICHARD

I'm the worst brother ever.

Trout doesn't get it. Trina is confused as well.

Richard pulls out the small felt box he got in the "office". He opens it to reveal the BRASS KETNER'S GROVE AMUSEMENT PARK TOKEN we saw at the beginning of the story. He holds it up for Trout to see.

CUT TO:

EXT. WAREHOUSE COMPOUND - DAY

Kathryn's Suburban and the motorhome arrive with a dozen news vans in close tow. Kathryn jumps out. Surveils. Eyes the security fence. Desperate.

KATHRYN

Am I cursed to syndication  
forever?!

The media circus is arriving crew by crew. Van by van. Teams hit the ground, cameras dispatched, booms stuck into the air. It is a spectacle. The same REPORTERS AND CAMERAMEN we saw in the opening sequence. Recording the same segments.

REPORTER #1

Twenty years ago the sleepy Coal  
Region town of Shenandoah,  
Pennsylvania received a rude  
awakening when seventh grader Trout  
Ketner went suddenly missing.

REPORTER #2

(overlapping)  
Sympathetic citizens from as far  
away as Harrisburg and Philadelphia  
descended upon Shenandoah to help  
with the search - but alas, their  
spirited efforts were in vain, as  
no trace of the boy was ever found  
... until now.

REPORTER #3

(overlapping)  
In what could be the strangest  
development possible in this twenty  
year old case, Trout Ketner  
reportedly reappeared yesterday in  
as mysterious a manner as he  
disappeared ...

The people from the vigil are arriving now too. In droves. Clambering from their vehicles in hopes of catching a glimpse.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHENANDOAH - DAY

Schmidty, & Deb drive back into town. They pass all the rundown store fronts. Past the Toy Store going out of business. They just look on ... this is their lives.

Then they catch a glimpse of a ray of hope.

TWO NEWSPAPER KIDS on a bike. BIG brother (12) & LITTLE brother (10). The older one pedaling, the younger on the axle pegs behind him throwing papers onto each doorstep. Laughing it up. The best years of their lives.

As they pass ...

LITTLE BROTHER

Yeah, well I'm gonna be president of a video game company. Then I could play games all day long and get all the high scores on everything ...

He chucks another newspaper and they're gone around a corner.

Schmidty and Deb can't help but smile.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

CLOSE ON THE SIDE OF A HUGE CRATE as it falls away. Then another. Then another. Finally, the REVEAL.

The Fountain. Just as we saw it before everything went haywire.

The inscription: "WISH YOUR TROUBLES AWAY".

Richard grabs a hose, starts filling it with water. He stares at it. Lost in a trance.

TROUT

The fountain ...

Richard carefully assembles his thoughts.

RICHARD

I did something terrible, Trout.

Trout is waiting ...

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I wished ...

Trout is on the edge of his seat ... "what!?!"

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I told mom that I made a wish at the fountain and that was the reason you went away. The day after you disappeared, I told her but she didn't believe me. She just kept saying that kids don't go away because of wishes ...

RICHARD (CONT'D)

they go away because there are bad people in the world.

(beat)

She kept trying to convince me that it wasn't my fault ... and eventually I believed it - or at least partly believed it.

(beat)

But Trout ... I'm one of those bad people ... I'm the bad person who did it ... I made that wish ... and you disappeared.

(beat)

I wished you away, Trout. *I made that wish.*

Trout is blown out of his socks ... it takes him a few seconds to respond.

TROUT

That thing really works?

RICHARD

Yeah ... who knew, huh?

Trout processes it all ... Richard's confession begins to sink in.

TROUT

Wait a second. You wanted me to go away?

(and)

Why? I'm your little brother.

RICHARD

Because I was a kid ... I was stupid ...

(beat)

I was jealous, Trout. Selfish and jealous.

They are silent. Trout is hurt, obviously. Richard has his tail tucked. A vulnerable moment.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I'm a lousy brother, Trout.

Trout waves his arms toward the Troutlander mural.

TROUT

A lousy brother wouldn't do that, would he?

He leans in and gives Richard the tiniest, gentlest Thwack on the ear.

TROUT (CONT'D)  
You're my big brother.

Richard smiles. It's the most comforting feeling in the world.

Richard grabs him and hugs him tight. Fighting the tears.

This is a tender moment that is rarely shared between two brothers. Intimate. Raw. No posturing what-so-ever.

Trina is sobbing ... she is pulled into the hug by Richard.

RICHARD  
I'm so sorry for what I did, Trout.  
But I'm happy that I had a chance  
to tell you ... to apologize.

Richard reads the inscription on the edge of the Fountain.  
"WISH YOUR TROUBLES AWAY".

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
Maybe this is my chance to finally  
do something great ...

He regards the Ketner's Grove Amusement Park Token in his hand.

Trina senses what's coming.

TRINA  
We're going to have to finally let  
him go, aren't we ...

Richard nods. Trina grabs Trout, wraps her arms around him. Squeezes him like she's never going to let him go. She is bawling now.

TROUT  
How do we know this is going to  
work again?

RICHARD  
How do we know if *anything* is going  
to work ...  
(to Trina only)  
We try it.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: AN ACCELERATOR PEDAL

Revving the motor.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Kathryn is inside the Suburban ... pointed straight at the gate. A fire in her eyes.

The P.A. And the Cameraman step back. A little nervous.

P.A.  
She's a little nuts.

CAMERMAN  
No. She's completely freakin' insane.  
(on the upside)  
But I've got it all on tape.

Kathryn throws the Suburban into gear, punches the gas and careens into the chain link gate.

SMASH! She drags the metal and barbed wire a few yards past the entrance.

The stunned crowd takes a second to process what happened, then flood through the opening.

Kathryn and her Cameraman leading the charge toward the warehouse in the distance.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Richard steps away from Trout. Trina is still wrapped around the little guy.

Richard gently separates them, pulls Trina away.

TRINA  
(sobbing)  
I don't want to say goodbye.

Richard tries to comfort her.

SLAM!

The door at the other end of the warehouse flies open.

A flood of reporters dispatches through the opening. Making their way through the rides ... closing in on Trout, Richard & Trina.

Richard looks to the reporters. Makes eye contact with Kathryn as she spots them.

KATHRYN  
There they are! This way!



Richard locks eyes with Trout.

RICHARD  
I'm glad I got to see you one more  
time ...

Trina is crying. Her arms wrapped around Richard.

TRINA  
I'm going to miss you so much,  
Trout.

TROUT  
(to Richard)  
What about your big TV thing?

RICHARD  
This isn't about me anymore.

Richard looks to the token in his hand. Trina tearfully helps him close his hand over it.

TROUT  
Hopscotch.

RICHARD  
Yeah, buddy?

TROUT  
(smiling)  
You turned out good. Mom and Dad  
would be proud.

Richard smiles. Liberated. He begins the swinging motion toward the fountain. He closes his eyes. Silently mouths the words to his wish ... throws the token toward the fountain.

As the token hits the water with a splash:

FROM INSIDE THE FOUNTAIN: Looking up as the token tumbles through the water toward us.

THE NOISE OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD IS GARBLED NOW ... FLASHES OF LIGHT from the cameras ...

As the coin COVERS CAMERA:

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. KETNERS AMUSEMENT PARK (HI-STRIKER) - DAY

The striker whizzes up the rail and slams the BELL.

It's APE at the HI-STRIKER, just as we saw him in the beginning ...

Off his self-satisfied smile ...

EXT. KETNERS FOREST (THE ROCK) - DAY

We can still HEAR THE RING OUT from the HI-STRIKER BELL in the distance.

Trout behind the rock.

He seems a little surprised to be there. But glad nonetheless. He checks himself ... all ten fingers, all ten toes ... present and accounted for.

He examines his shirt ... mustard ... ketchup ... and the small tear from the Dairy Queen incident. *It was real.*

He steps out from behind the rock ... sees the BABY DEER on the trail ahead. *Elation.* Trout starts running.

CUT TO:

EXT. KETNERS AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

For real. The way it was before.

Trout tears through the park. Soaking up everything in sight. Beautiful. Glorious. The world is right in Trout's eyes once again.

The Vomitron. Haunted House. Tea Cups. Cotton Candy Vendors. Merry-Go-Round.

CALLIOPE MUSIC FILLS THE AIR.

***IT IS 1987 AGAIN!***

Upon this realization, Trout knows exactly what to do - he bolts through the amusement park.

He sees Hopscotch in the distance. Standing in front of the fountain.

CUT TO:

EXT. KETNERS AMUSEMENT PARK - FOUNTAIN

Hopscotch opens his eyes, readies himself to toss the token into the fountain. As he moves his arm forward ...

THWACK!

Trout flicks Hopscotch's ear. Hopscotch recoils, never lets go of the token.

HOPSCOTCH

Owww!

Trout just stares at him ... a huge grin stretching across his face ... still panting from the run.

HOPSCOTCH (CONT'D)

What's your problem?

The Hi-Striker bell rings again in the distance. Trout grabs Hopscotch by the arm, starts dragging him away from the Fountain.

TROUT

C'mon.

HOPSCOTCH

I'm not going anywhere with you.

TROUT

C'mon. I just wanna help you with something.

Hopscotch continues to drag his feet as Trout pulls him toward the outdoor arcade.

EXT. KETNERS GROVE - OUTDOOR ARCADE - DAY

THE CLAW GRABBER GAME

Same as it was before. Trout is too giddy to speak, rushes up and peers through the glass at the prizes inside. Searching desperately.

Trout's face washes with horror.

Reveal the items inside. Garbage Pail Kids Dolls. A Cap'n Crunch figurine. Candy necklaces in plastic bubbles.

BUT NO RING.

TROUT

Oh no! *It's gone!*

HOPSCOTCH

(playfully sarcastic)

What are you talking about? The Strawberry Shortcake doll is right there.

TROUT

(panicked)

No ... *the ring.*

Trout is desperate. Almost on the verge of tears.

TROUT (CONT'D)  
I hafta help you get the ring.

Hopscotch is baffled but nonetheless, concerned. He places his arm around Trout's shoulders. Comforting.

HOPSCOTCH  
Calm down, buddy. What's the matter?

TROUT  
You don't understand. You have to get that ring ... you have to get it and give it to Trina.

Hopscotch is caught off guard.

HOPSCOTCH  
Trina?

TROUT  
Yes! You love her. She loves you!

Hopscotch reaches into his pocket, pulls out the plastic bubble with the ring inside. He holds it up for Trout to see.

HOPSCOTCH  
This ring?

Trout is dumbfounded, jumps to his feet.

TROUT  
You got it?  
(realizing)  
You got it!  
(beat)  
When?

HOPSCOTCH  
Five minutes ago.

Trout falls into Hopscotch's arms. Relief. Thank God! Hopscotch is completely confused. This moment is bigger than he could possibly comprehend.

HOPSCOTCH (CONT'D)  
Are you alright, Trout?

Trout regains his composure. Straightens himself out. Big smile on his face.

TROUT  
I'm fine. I just had a long day.

Trout looks into glass of the Claw Grabber machine.

HIS POV: A figure appears behind him. His mother. Her reflection set against the dolls and toys inside.

MRS. KETNER

There you are! I've been looking  
all over for you.

Trout spins around, sees his mother standing before him. In the flesh. He runs to her and melts in her arms. He hugs her like his life depended on it.

MRS. KETNER (CONT'D)

I guess I should make Oreo Pie more  
often.

(and)

Now you boys run along and wash up.  
I don't want any dirty hand prints  
on the--

Trout interrupts her. Releases his hug, reaches up and places his hands on her cheeks ... looks into her eyes.

TROUT

I missed you.

Mrs. Ketner is floored. Speechless.

Trout joins Hopscotch and together they hustle off.  
Hopscotch stares at the ring in his hand.

In the distance, young Schmidty, Deb and Trina are running toward them.

HOPSCOTCH

What made you think I was gonna  
give the ring to Trina?

TROUT

(playfully dismissive)  
Give it to whoever want ...

Hopscotch eyes him carefully.

HOPSCOTCH

You mad?

TROUT

You're my big brother ... besides,  
I don't really think I'm ready to  
be going steady.

(off look)

It's very complicated.

Hopscotch reacts quizzically to Trout's rare moment of maturity. He stares at him for a second ... then a smile curls across his lips.

HOPSCOTCH

I've been thinking about those life preservers ... I think the logo should be a patch. Embroidered. It'd be classy that way.

TROUT

*Classy. Perfect.*

Keep the sound of their playful banter as we CRANE UP AND AWAY ... Into the foliage ... wandering through the leaves and branches toward the sky ...

A RUMBLING SOUND FILLS THE SOUNDTRACK ...

Growing ... like a mechanical monster hurtling toward us ...

SUDDENLY, A ROLLER COASTER WIPES INTO FRAME ... It's screaming along at a million miles an hour. RIDERS SCREAM WITH DELIGHT.

EXT. ROLLER COASTER - CONTINUOUS - MOVING

CAMERA TRACKS FORWARD THROUGH THE COASTER CARS as it zooms along the track, through loops and corkscrews ...

DOZENS OF ELATED KIDS enjoying the ride. The brave ones with their arms in the air ... others white knuckling. All of them wearing LIFE PRESERVERS with the Ketner's logo on it.

This is no longer 1987.

***We are in 2007. A happier and more fulfilling present day.***

THE CAMERA FINDS Schmidty and Deb. Both 33. Sharing a car. He's still in his tow company uniform, she's in street clothes. Happiest you've ever seen them.

THE CAMERA FINALLY FINDS the front coaster car. Trina (33) and Richard (34). He's howling with glee, she's shrieking and laughing.

As the coaster whips through a big turn, WE WIDEN enough to see the logo on the front of the car: THE TROUTLANDER. The roller coaster makes a hard turn into a loop, Trina grabs Richard's hand ...

CLOSE ON TRINA'S HAND: The same ring from the Claw Grabber Game ... a little worse for the wear, but still shiny after all these years.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KETNERS AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

We meander through the park. Twenty years have left many of the old standards intact. The Carousel. The Ferris wheel. The Tea Cups. But through the years, the park has updated and added. Newfangled rides are mixed in and amongst the classics.

We pass ticket booths. Cotton Candy Vendors. We finally find a very familiar sight ... the FOUNTAIN. It remains entirely unchanged. The inscription around the ledge. The cascading rivulets of water spattering against the surface.

A MAN sitting on the edge of the fountain, his back to us. A gaggle of YOUNGSTERS are seated on the ground in front of him. Rapt. All eyes on him.

MAN

Alright ... who's next.

A RED-HEADED KID excitedly waves his hand in the air.

MAN (CONT'D)

OK ... lemme take a look at you.

The kid stands.

MAN (CONT'D)

Mmmmm ... mmmmm ... Any peculiar habits ... weird hobbies?

RED-HEADED KID

I'm taking accordion lessons ...  
and I have a birth mark the shape  
of Idaho.

The Man nods ...

MAN

Your belly button ... inny or outy?

Off the kid's quizzical look ...

CUT TO:

EXT. ROLLER COASTER - DAY

The Troutlander reaches the apex, begins it's descent.

PULL OUT, off the smiling faces of our four friends; Richard & Trina, Schmidty & Deb ... WIDER STILL, to see what awaits them ahead:

The track ends, like a launch ramp pointed toward the lake. The coaster blasts off the end of the tracks ... majestic in flight ...

SLOW MOTION as PONTOONS deploy and inflate ...

As the coaster flies through the air ... FREEZE FRAME.

FADE TO BLACK.