

BRIAN AND THE RIVER HORSE

by

Julie Henson

Apt 4019, Le Phare IV
Port Cogolin
83310
Cogolin
Var
France

Tel : 00 33 877 12 82 13

Email : grimaud83hotmail.fr

FADE IN: PRESENT DAY

INT. FAMILY HOUSE, CORRIDOR, UPSTAIRS - MORNING

It is very early. The P.O.V. is that of a small child who is awake before everybody else in the house. Everything, (height of furniture, pictures, windows, door handles etc) are seen at the height of his eyes. The house is very quiet. The child listens at a bedroom door. Whoever is inside is still asleep. He goes downstairs.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - MORNING

Child's P.O.V. continues. There is a vase of flowers on a table. He plucks some of the petals off one of the flowers. Then removes a flower from the vase and continues walking through the house. He goes into the kitchen. As he walks, he plucks the petals off the flower and drops them onto the floor, leaving a trail.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Child's P.O.V. continues. On a wall are a child's drawings. The subjects are flowers, most with missing petals. The name 'Brian' is written on these drawings. The handwriting is that of a very young child. He returns to the hallway.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - MORNING

The child pauses in front of a mirror. He looks at his reflection. He sticks his tongue out; pulls a 'scary' face; does some 'karate' moves; generally admires himself. This is BRIAN CASSELL. He is 6 years old. He is wearing Spiderman pyjamas which are slightly too small for him. He turns and enters what we expect to be the sitting room of the house.

INT. SITTING ROOM - MORNING

There is some typical sitting room furniture - a TV, a sideboard etc. However, instead of a sofa and easy chairs there are a hospital bed (no bedding), a wheelchair, and a wheeled trolley containing medical equipment and medicine.

Brian lies flat on the bed. We hear an electronic sound. The bed moves up and down a few times, slowly. The sound changes slightly and now the head of the bed moves up at an angle until he is sitting almost at right angles. He lowers it until he is laying flat once more. He is not smiling - not having fun even though he is playing.

Brian sits in the space underneath the wheelchair. Still unsmiling. Thoughtful. A few seconds later he hears a door open upstairs and rushes out of the room, through the hallway, back up the stairs and into the bathroom.

BRIAN

Dad ... Dad ? ... Dad!

INT. UPSTAIRS, BATHROOM - MORNING

VINCENT CASSELL (Vince) is about 35/40 years old - he is Brian's father - he has evidently just got out of bed. He is standing at the sink looking into the mirror. His face is expressionless. His hands are hanging by his side. He is dejected. Vince's watch is close to Brian's face. Brian touches it. Vince is wearing a wedding ring.

BRIAN

When?

VINCE

Brian...

Brian looks up at Vince. Brian is smiling now, his eyes bright. We see that Vince is tired and unhappy. He bends down to his son.

VINCE

A few hours yet, Brian

BRIAN

Only a few!

Vince walks out of shot. Sound of a shower. Brian looks horrified. He does not want to take a shower. He leaves the bathroom, runs down the corridor and back into his room.

INT. UPSTAIRS, CORRIDOR - MORNING

VINCE (O.S.)

Shower first! Brian!

Brian? Shower...

Brian does not respond. Vince gives up, but not through lack of control or discipline, this is further evidence of his weariness. Something is defeating him - but it is not Brian. A shower runs.

Brian, dressed now in a Superman T-shirt and a pair of jeans, runs out of his room and back towards the bathroom door and to the top of the stairs.

BRIAN
I'm dressed Dad! I'm already
dressed - I'm Superman!

What follows is the first 'Pretend Play' scene in the film. In these scenes, Brian's experiences are completely different to those of the other characters - except for his friend Robbie, with whom he shares some of these scenes. Brian pretends less as his story progresses.

PRETEND PLAY : Brian is at the top of the stairs. It appears to us that he throws himself down the stairs. But Brian is pretending to be Superman. He flies and swoops down the stairs and around the hallway. There is a rush of colour and laughter, a sense of sheer glee. What he has actually done is use a slide that is built into one side of the stairs to slide down into a ball pond of polystyrene balls at the foot of the stair-slide.

VINCE (O.S.)
Hey Superman!

Brian looks up to his father at the top of the stairs. Vince, freshly showered, has a towel around his waist.

BRIAN
Come on Dad!

Brian's enthusiasm and energy finally get to Vince. He slides down to Brian. This is a familiar activity for them.

VINCE
OK - here I come!

INT. BALLPOND AT BOTTOM OF STAIRS - DAY

Now they are both in the ball pond. They laugh together, tickle each other. Then both become serious again.

BRIAN
I'll have a shower with Mum later.

VINCE
I thought so.

They are both thoughtful for a second. Vince looks sad. Brian mimics him with an over-exaggerated 'sad' face.

BRIAN
Dad?

VINCE
Mmmm?

BRIAN

Ha ha!

He pulls his hand out from the depths of the ball pond and runs off with Vince's towel. Some of the plastic balls escape the ball pond and bounce across the floor. Vince throws more of the balls at Brian.

INT. AT THE DOORWAY TO SITTING ROOM - DAY

It is about twenty minutes later. Vince is dressed. He and Brian look into the sitting room from the doorway.

VINCE

We need to make the bed - and maybe put more photos out.

BRIAN

I'll help.

VINCE

Before that - clean teeth and wash face please Superman!

They move into the hallway.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS, HALLWAY - DAY

BRIAN

Why?

VINCE

Teeth! Face! And maybe you should change that shirt?

Brian looks down at his Superman T-shirt. It is grubby and tightly stretched over his stomach.

BRIAN

Why?

VINCE

Oh nothing much. Covered in cereal. Has been worn for three days. Two sizes too small.

BRIAN

Why?

VINCE

Because you are a scruffy little
boy who's turning into a scruffy
big boy.

KIRSTY, Brian's 12 year old sister, comes down the stairs
and into the hallway.

KIRSTY

And you stink!

She pushes past Brian into the room and bursts into tears.

INT. SITTING ROOM - DAY

VINCE

Kirst?

KIRSTY

I know exactly what's going to
happen in this room - so don't
patronise me!

She storms out of the room and out of the house. Vince gets
the defeated look again. He follows her to the house door

INT. DOWNSTAIRS, HALLWAY - DAY

BRIAN

Patronise me?

VINCE

Kirsty!

Vince re-joins Brian in the sitting room.

BRIAN

Her shirt's tighter than mine.

VINCE

Yeah - but she's not a superhero.

BRIAN

No way!

BRIAN

What 'sactly is going to happen
here?

VINCE

Mum's going to ...
(beat)
live here.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS, SITTING ROOM - DAY

A short time later. Vince makes the bed and Brian organises some framed photos on a shelf next to the bed.

BRIAN

"Dad" ... "Mum" ... "Brian" ... "Brian and Mum together" ... "Brian and Dad" ... "Brian" ... "Granddad and Brian" ... "Mum and the hippos" ... Dad? Why're hippos called 'river horses'?

VINCE

Hmmm - you'll have to ask your Mum that one, she's the hippo expert.

BRIAN

"Brian and the hippos" ... "Brian" ...
(beat)
that's a nice one of me ...

VINCE

Any of Kirsty there?

BRIAN

Nah ...
(beat)
"Granddad and Mum"
(beat)
I don't want any of Kirsty.

VINCE

Mum might...

BRIAN

"Brian and Robbie" ...

VINCE

Robbie?

BRIAN

Yeah. Mum likes Robbie.

VINCE

She loves Kirsty.

BRIAN

Ugh! ... nah.

Vince puts a couple of photos of Kirsty onto the shelf.

VINCE

I tell you what, you and Mum
decide together later eh?

Brian places Kirsty's photos behind the others. He takes a flower from a vase and plucks off the petals as he looks around the room.

BRIAN

Will we still watch TV in here?

VINCE

That's the idea. So that we can
watch together; spend evenings
together, like normal.

BRIAN

Normal? Like before Mum was sick?

VINCE

Yeah.

BRIAN

She must be getting better if the
hospital's sending her home! Just
like normal again?

VINCE

Well no, she ... well ...

Vince walks out of the sitting room, across the hallway and into the downstairs bathroom. Brian follows.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM - DAY

VINCE

Look ... this will Mum's private
bathroom.

Vince deliberately cuts Brian off from his questioning. He catches sight of his own reflection in the mirror. He looks at himself. He is controlling his emotions.

BRIAN

Her toothbrush could go there ...
her soap there ... her towel there,
mine here. All her makeup goes in
this drawer. Her best perfume
there. Yeah?

He finishes pointing. He has had no response from Vince.

BRIAN
Dad?

VINCE
What?

BRIAN
What's the matter Dad? What's
wrong?

VINCE
Nothing. Nothing's wrong.

BRIAN
And the matter?

VINCE
What? Oh - nothing's the matter.

BRIAN
Nothing's wrong ... nothing's the
matter ... sure ?

VINCE
Sure.

Brian turns and walks out of the bathroom.

BRIAN
Good. Only Kirsty said that Mum's
going to die. But I never believe
her !

***PRETEND PLAY : Brian is a Kung-Fu expert. He spins around
above the ground and delivers a perfect kick to Kirsty's throat.
He throws her against a wall. She slides down to the floor.***

Vince follows Brian from the bathroom to the sitting room.

INT. SITTING ROOM - DAY

Brian inspects the contents of the medicine trolley.

BRIAN
Loads of tablets.

VINCE
Don't touch the medication Brian.

Brian holds tablet bottles in each hand.

BRIAN

Look how many! At least enough to
make her better. At least!

Vince finds it all too much. He does not know how much
Brian understands or how much to tell him. Brian tries to
open a tablet bottle. Vince sees and snaps.

VINCE

Brian! What did I just tell you?

He snatches the container; shocks Brian by the violence of
this action. Vince relents a little.

VINCE

You shouldn't touch medicines. You
know that!

BRIAN

Yes, but I couldn't open it!

(beat)

Can you open it Dad? For when Mum
needs it?

VINCE

Yes, don't worry. Look.

He opens and closes the container. Brian tries to open it.

VINCE

Brian! Oh - you'll never open it
anyway. It's childproof.

BRIAN

Child proof? What's that?

VINCE

Children can't open something
that's childproof. It makes
dangerous things safe. It ...

BRIAN

You open it again.

Vince opens and closes it.

BRIAN

Now me.

He tries, fails and gets frustrated.

BRIAN

But how does it know when it's me
and not you?

Vince laughs. The doorbell rings Brian runs to answer it.

INT./EXT. DOORWAY AND HALLWAY OF HOUSE - DAY

A small boy rushes into the house. His mother, SARA, stands in the porch; she has a bunch of flowers. The boy is ROBBIE, Brian's best friend, also six years old. Sara and Robbie live a couple of doors away.

BRIAN

Robbie look! See this? you can't
open it because it knows that you
are a child and look ...

(beat)

...that is Mum's bathroom now. My
toothbrush is going to be there.

ROBBIE

And mine when I sleep over?

BRIAN

Yes. And here is Mum's new bedroom
where she will watch TV and get
better ... and ... guess what?

(beat)

Kirsty lied! Because everything's
fine and nothing's the matter.

ROBBIE

Your Mum's not going to die?

BRIAN

Nope, she has to rest I think. But
everything's going to be just like
normal.

Vince and Sara exchange glances at this.

ROBBIE

That's good. Play on the slide?

BRIAN

Yeahhhhh! Yeah, yeah yeah.

ROBBIE

Yeahhhhhh.....and I'm hungry.

BRIAN
Me too - let's have a picnic in ...

ROBBIE
... the ball pond?

BRIAN
Yeah and we can pretend we're
under water.

They move towards the kitchen.

VINCE
Brian? Put the tablets back on the
trolley first.

Brian still has the container in his hand. He and Robbie look at it and then at each other and then walk into the sitting room with it.

SARA
Bearing up?

INT. DOWNSTAIRS, HALLWAY - DAY

She steps inside and looks at the flower vase on the hallway table. Most of the flower heads have their petals missing. In fact, there are flower petals in random places all around the house.

VINCE
Just.

BRIAN (O.S.)
See?

ROBBIE (O.S.)
But how does it know I'm a child?

BRIAN (O.S.)
I...I don't... I ... it ... it can tell by
... by your breath!

Sara and Vince look at each other puzzled.

SARA
Breath?

VINCE
Beats me.

SARA
You sure about having Robbie over?

VINCE

Yes - oh yes! - we need him! Too much excitement and too many potential questions that I can't handle today.

BRIAN (O.S.)

Yes - your breath! Because kids have strawberry breath and adults have minty breath!

ROBBIE (O.S.)

Ugh - yeah.

Vince frowns, puzzled. Sara nods.

SARA

Toothpaste.

The adults smile.

BRIAN (O.S.)

Except Kisrty - and her breath smells of cigarettes.

Vince and Sara simply exchange a look over this piece of information. She replaces the old flowers with her new ones. Gathering up the loose petals from the table and the floor she hands them over to Vince.

SARA

Why does Brian do this to the flowers?

VINCE

Beats me.

(beat)

At least he's not smoking yet.

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

A short time later. The boys enter Brian's room. They carry handfuls of balls from the ball pond. They throw the balls at each other.

ROBBIE

What shall we do now?

Brian picks up a photo and shows it to Robbie.

BRIAN

Look at this, one of Mum's hippos had a baby.

ROBBIE

A baby hippo?

ROBBIE

Yes. The zoo sent her this photo. Going to put it by her bed.

(beat)

Dad says it'd make her feel "as good as new" to see the baby for real.

ROBBIE

Make her better?

BRIAN

Yes! As good as new! But just for now she's too poorly to go to the zoo.

ROBBIE

But if she doesn't go - she won't see the baby and then won't be as good as new - and if she's not as good as new she won't get better then - if she's not better then she can't go to the zoo and if she can't go to the zoo then ... she won't ever... ever... ever...

Overlapping dialogue:

The boys come to the same conclusion.

ROBBIE

... get better!

BRIAN

...ever get better!

BRIAN

Then things won't be normal again!

They ponder this in silence. Brian looks at the photo.

ROBBIE

What can we do?

BRIAN

I know! Let's kidnap it and bring it here!

ROBBIE

You mean pretend?

BRIAN

Not just pretend. Sort of real-pretend!

ROBBIE

How?

BRIAN

Hunters!

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

PRETEND PLAY : Brian and Robbie are in a jungle. There are huge snakes hanging from the trees, tigers peering through the leaves, wild elephants stampeding and flattening everything that gets in their way. Wild, half-naked people in garish body paint threaten the boys. Three arrows hit the tree just above Robbie's head.

BRIAN

Get down Robbie. Poisoned arrows!

ROBBIE

Whoa!

He rolls under the bed to join Brian who looks through a pair of binoculars.

ROBBIE

That was close!

BRIAN

Shhhhhh.

INT. FRONT DOOR AND HALLWAY - DAY

A few hours later. Some of the new flowers that Sara brought have 'lost' their petals. The plucked petals are scattered on the hall table, across the hallway floor, and make a trail into the sitting room.

Vince wheels Alice, 34, and Brian's Mum, in the wheel chair through the hallway into the sitting room and helps her onto the bed. She looks very ill and frail.

ALICE

Good to be home! Where're the kids?

VINCE

Brian and Robbie are here. Kirsty went over to Rachel's. Should I call her?

ALICE

No, leave her be for now.

Robbie enters, he looks back into the hallway.

BRIAN (O.S.)

...and we'll have binoculars...

ALICE

Hi Robbie, having fun?

ROBBIE

Yes, planning a kidnap ...

Hearing Alice's voice Brian pushes past Robbie and launches himself onto her bed. They hug. Robbie walks to the bed.

ALICE

So who are you planning to kidnap?

ROBBIE

The baby hippo! For you.

BRIAN

Look!

He hands her the baby hippo photo.

ALICE

Oh Amethyst's baby! Beautiful!
She's a pygmy hippo you know? ahhh
- sweet picture.

ROBBIE

Pygmy?

ALICE

It means 'small'

Alice turns the photo over and reads something on the back.
Brian whispers to Robbie.

BRIAN

Small? Easier to kidnap!

ALICE

They've called her Amber. Vinny,
that was my suggestion! And, let's
see, oh! The Zoo is going to have
a special 'Hippopotamus Day'

BRIAN

Mum! Let's go? Can you go? Dad
said that you're...

ROBBIE

...very poorly...

ALICE

He's right, but you...

BRIAN

...but if you see the baby ...

ALICE

Amber.

BRIAN

Amber, then you will be as good as
new! Dad said. Just like normal.

VINCE

Brian...

BRIAN

You have to see it. You have to.
Like normal.

ALICE

Well, you go, you and Robbie, and
you could visit her for me.

Brian opens his mouth to protest further, but realises that
he has an opportunity here.

BRIAN

I ... ah ... ahhhhhh! ... but ... so ... if
you can't go, we can still go?

ALICE
Yes, of course you can.

BRIAN
Yes!

ROBBIE
And that's when we can kidnap

Brian pushes Robbie to stop him talking.

ALICE
What's this kidnap you're pla ...

Brian is one-step ahead of Robbie. This opportunity has changed things for him. He dismisses Robbie's comment.

BRIAN
It's nothing. Just a game ...

He nods at Robbie.

BRIAN
He's just a kid. Just pretending.
Come on Robbie.

The boys run out.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

ROBBIE
I'm not just a kid. You're just a
kid.
(beat)
If I'm just a kid - you're just a
kid!

Brian is climbing a rope ladder up to a tree house.

BRIAN
Shut up Robbie, course we're both
just kids. We can't tell anyone
what we're going to do. OK?

ROBBIE
But ...

Robbie starts climbing.

BRIAN
We can't tell the grown-ups.
They'll stop us. They'll say "oh

no, you can't do that, poor little baby hippo, it's not allowed, it's wrong".

ROBBIE

They might help.

Brian snorts (a copy of Kirsty's sarcastic snorts). The boys are sitting with their legs dangling over the edge of the platform. The tree house is behind them.

BRIAN

No. What we need is a plan. We need to get Amber out of the zoo and hidden in the garage.

ROBBIE

A plan? I know!

BRIAN

What?

ROBBIE

We could take a dog's lead, disguise her as a dog, and say that we are just taking her for a walk and bring her back here.

BRIAN

They'd stop us at the Zoo gates.

ROBBIE

Or we could hire a helicopter and go down on a rope and pull her up into the helicopter.

BRIAN

Yeah! But, no - too noisy. Granddad Joe! We could ask to go in his van!

ROBBIE

Yes! And put Amber into the back of the van. Would he say "Yes"?

BRIAN

Dunno. He might. He's not like a real adult.

They sit quietly thinking for a few seconds.

BRIAN

Oh I just don't think we can do it at all.

ROBBIE

But we need to do it - to make your Mum as good as new! To make everything normal again!

BRIAN

I know - but ...

KIRSTY (O.S.)

You're both stupid!

She was inside the tree house all the time. The boys enter.

INT. TREEHOUSE - DAY

KIRSTY

Mum's going to die just like Grandma. Nothing's ever going to be "*normal*" again. Nothing can make Mum "*as good as new.*" Dad just told you that because you're a baby.

BRIAN

I'm not a baby.

KIRSTY

Oh no? Only a baby would think that kidnapping a hippopotamus is a good idea.

Overlapping dialogue:

ROBBIE

That's a secret!

BRIAN

We're not going to do it anyway.

KIRSTY

Oh yeah? Well it's not a secret. I know! And I'll tell!

She gets up and flounces towards the door. Robbie sniffs the air as she passes.

BRIAN

We're not going to do it anyway!

ROBBIE

You been smoking Kirsty?

KIRSTY

Oh shut up brat.

She flicks the dog-end that she's been hiding at Robbie and leaves. He pretends to smoke it and then passes it to Brian in a "cool" manner, as seen on TV. Brian pretends to smoke. They look at each other and pull faces of disgust.

ROBBIE

It's worse than mint toothpaste!

They are silent for a few seconds. Brian decides.

BRIAN

We're not going to do it Robbie - she's right. It's a stupid idea. But we could play at a pretend kidnap. Being hunters was fun.

INT. SITTING ROOM - DAY

A few days later. Alice is in bed. Brian is in bed with her "picking her brains" about hippo care. He has a flower in his hand, each time he speaks he plucks a petal. Alice notices this - but does not stop him.

BRIAN

So, could somebody ever have a hippo as a pet?

ALICE

No. They need a lot of space and special care. They should live in the wild or in zoos like ours where specially trained people know how to look after them.

BRIAN

Aren't you specially trained?

ALICE

Yes I am.

BRIAN

So you could have one here?

ALICE

No!

BRIAN

Not even a very small one like the baby pygmy hippo.

ALICE

No! And Amber's not that small. She weighs about the same as you, or Robbie.

BRIAN

I can lift Robbie!

PRETEND PLAY : Brian is competing in a weightlifting competition. He lifts Robbie above his head and receives huge applause from thousands of adoring fans. His family is at the front of the crowd. A perfectly healthy Alice rushes up to him, hugs him speaks to him in this fantasy – whilst Robbie is still held aloft above Brian's head.

ALICE

Brian! You're so strong. I knew you'd win.

BRIAN

Thanks Mum – let me just put Robbie down.

ALICE

What?

Alice's question brings Brian back to reality.

BRIAN

Just let's pretend. If we had Amber for a pet what would she eat?

ALICE

OK. Well, she'd eat a lot of grass and fruit.

BRIAN

And ice cream and lollipops?

ALICE

No!

BRIAN

What about the sugar-free
lollipops that you get for us?

ALICE

Oh I'm sure she'd love those!

BRIAN

And ice cream?

ALICE

She'd love it ... but ...

BRIAN

And where could she sleep?

ALICE

Well, you know ...?

BRIAN

Just pretending.

ALICE

Well OK. Errrm ... she might like to
sleep behind a bush in the garden
because she's probably quite shy.
Or maybe in the garage.

BRIAN

Mmmm. Would she need anything
else?

ALICE

Well she loves water.

BRIAN

My paddling pool!

ALICE

That would be perfect.

BRIAN

Would it?

ALICE

Yes - you'd fill it with water,
Amber would roll over in it and
tip it up, the lawn would turn
into a mud-bath - and she could
wallow away. All you'd have to do
is keep topping up the water with

the hose pipe. The more mud the better.

BRIAN

Right ...

ALICE

But she's in the best place right now. She's at the zoo and she's with her Mum.

Alice tickles him Brian has a giggling fit. Vince enters.

VINCE

Calm down now Brian.

ALICE

It's OK Vince. I'm OK. Come and join us.

Vince gets up onto the bed. He takes the denuded flower head from Brian and tidies up the petals.

BRIAN

Dad, when you take me and Robbie to the zoo, can we take some sugar-free lollipops for Amber?

VINCE

We're not going to the zoo Brian, not yet.

BRIAN

No, not yet, but to the "Hippopotamus Day"?

VINCE

No Brian, we're not going. I think that we just need all to be here. Together.

ALICE

Vince, you could ...

VINCE

No, I'm not going! It'll take a whole day. I'm not leaving you.

KIRSTY (O.S.)

Granddad's here!

Vince and Alice are puzzled.

VINCE
She sounds happy.

ALICE
He's promised her something.

Kirsty enters with her arm linked possessively into that of a man of about 55/60 years old. Joe, Alice's father.

ALICE
Dad! Lovely surprise. I thought you were coming over tomorrow.

Brian launches himself at Joe.

BRIAN
Granddad Joe, will you take Robbie and me to the zoo, for the "Hippopotamus Day", we've got to go, and Dad ...

KIRSTY
Oh get lost Brian, Granddad's taking me and Rachel to the Shopping Centre, we're going to see a film and ...

ALICE
Dad?

JOE
Well, she called and she sounded so upset. She said that she feels in the way here. I thought that ...

BRIAN
Then you can take us to the Zoo!

KIRSTY
The "Hippopotamus Day" isn't even today. Stupid! It's in two weeks.

BRIAN
Will you take us Granddad?

JOE
Well, you know, I'm only dropping Kirsty and her friend off - then picking them up. I'm not spending time with them.

KIRSTY

No! No - he's not ...

JOE

I'm coming straight back here to visit your Mum and help your Dad.

BRIAN

But will you take us to the "Hippopotamus Day".

JOE

No, I don't think so, that would take a whole day, and ...

BRIAN

It's in two weeks time ... not today!

JOE

No ... I ...

Brian runs out of the room. The front door opens and slams shut.

KIRSTY

Ha ha ha !

VINCE

I'll go after him.

ALICE

Leave him. He'll go straight to Robbie's. Just call to let Sara know.

Vince goes out to the hallway to make the call.

ALICE

Know what I'd really like Dad?

JOE

Just tell me, whatever you want.

ALICE

I want Vince to take Kirsty and Rachel...

KIRSTY

But Mum! Dad's like ... ugh! He just

ALICE

I want to give Kirsty some
spending money.

Kirsty likes that and shuts up.

ALICE

I want Brian to be left to talk
things over with Robbie. And while
Vince, Kirsty and Brian are all
out I want to have you to myself.

Vince comes back into the room.

VINCE

Brian's there. Sara said that he
can stay for the afternoon.

ALICE

One down ...

VINCE

What?

ALICE

Kirsty'll explain the rest to you
in the car.

EXT. ROBBIE'S GARDEN - EARLY EVENING, SAME DAY

Brian and Robbie are "working" on pieces of wood and some
wheels. Judging by the mess, they have obviously been at
this task for some time.

BRIAN

You sure this used to work?

ROBBIE

Yes, Dad made it. You sit on it
and steer it by pulling the rope.
The rope pulls the front wheels
like that ... and that. This piece
of wood here is the brake. See?

BRIAN

Yeah! And at the back here we
could make some straps for Amber.

PRETEND PLAY : the boys and Amber are racing around in the go-cart which Brian is driving with great skill.

BRIAN

Hold on!

The go-cart leaves the ground, Brian presses a button to make the wings appear and they soar above Robbie's garden. Looking down Brian sees Sara and oeE enter the garden. He lands the go-cart.

Joe has also entered the garden in reality.

SARA

Look who's here boys.

ROBBIE

Hello Granddad Joe.

Brian ignores Joe.

JOE

Hi Robbie. Your Mum says that you can go to the "Hippopotamus Day" at the zoo with Brian and me, if you want to.

Brian is up and running in an instant.

BRIAN

Come on Robbie, we've got to get our hunting kit ready ... we've got to tell Mum ... we've got to get some sugar-free lollipops for bait.

ROBBIE

What about the go-cart?

Brian stops in his tracks. He goes over to Joe.

BRIAN

Will we be going in your van Granddad, or do we need Robbie's go-cart?

JOE

Well, we'll go to the zoo in the van, but we could do some more work on that go-cart eh?

(beat)
Looks like it needs some new parts.

BRIAN
Yes! It might be useful for moving Amber around. Come on Robbie, let's sort out our hunting stuff.

The boys run off towards Brian's house. Joe Follows.

EXT./INT. DOOR TO BRIAN'S HOUSE - EVENING

It is a few minutes later. Kirsty and her friend Rachel, surrounded by shopping bags, cry. Brian and Robbie arrive.

RACHEL
Oh, why did she have to go and die today? Ruined our shopping trip.

KIRSTY
(angry)And mothers aren't supposed to die before their children, it's not right. It's not fair!

They carry on crying and wailing. The boys stop running, horrified at what they hear. Joe arrives.

JOE
What's wrong?

RACHEL
Her mother died!

Brian runs into to the sitting room; his mother's bed is empty. Joe enters the room.

INT. SITTING ROOM - EVENING

BRIAN
Mum?

Vince enters, he is obviously distressed.

VINCE
Joe? Alice just ...

BRIAN
Mum ?

VINCE
... can't accept it.

JOE

What's happened?

Alice appears from the downstairs shower room, holding a damp flannel to her face. She has been crying.

ALICE

Amethyst died suddenly.

ROBBIE

Who's Amethyst?

KIRSTY

Amber's mother.

Kirsty, Rachel and Alice start crying again.

ALICE

I should've been there for her. I looked after her for over 10 years. I should have been there.

VINCE

Alice!

ALICE

And now, poor little orphan Amber. She needs me more than ever. She just needs everything to be normal.

Brian and Robbie exchange a significant look. Brian drags Robbie off to the ball pond.

INT. BALL POND AT FOOT OF STAIRS - EVENING

They submerge themselves so that nobody can hear them. In that strangely lit submerged world, Brian makes his decision. They whisper :

BRIAN

They need each other for everything to be normal. Mum needs Amber and Amber needs Mum.

(pause)

So, it's real now. Not pretend.

ROBBIE

The hunting with the go-cart?

BRIAN

No, the kidnap with the van!

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

A few days later. The boys prepare for the kidnap. Both want to have the only pair of binoculars and tug at the strap trying to take possession. Brian wins and puts the strap around his neck.

BRIAN

I've got the lollipops, the kite and the survival blanket in my backpack; you've got the rope, the peanuts and the folding canoe.

ROBBIE

Yep. Should we take turns with the binoculars?

BRIAN

Yes. Let's put the walkie-talkies on our belts. All we need is a map of the zoo.

ROBBIE

Can we have a lollipop now?

BRIAN

Good idea, and remember, don't mention the kidnap. Pretend that we're pretending!

ROBBIE

But we are pretending that we're pretending!

BRIAN

I know that, and you know that, but adults see things backwards sometimes. So, we've got to pretend to pretend that we're pretending otherwise they might think we're not really pretending.

ROBBIE

Okay, so if we pretend properly then they'll think we're really pretending when we're not?

BRIAN

Yes. Remember, two adults are worse than one! Let's hunt.

PRETEND PLAY : *Brian and Robbie are back in their jungle. Having escaped the wild natives they find themselves at the top of a high waterfall. They dive spectacularly into the deep pool at the bottom of the waterfall.*

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

Getting out of the ball pond at the bottom of the stair slide Brian and Robbie go into the sitting room. Sara is visiting Alice.

INT. SITTING ROOM - DAY

SARA

Look at you two! Where're you off to?

ROBBIE

Pretend hunting for baby hippos.

BRIAN

Just *pretend*!

SARA

I like the hippo wellies - but yours are on the wrong feet Brian.

The boys look at Brian's feet puzzled.

ALICE

All kitted out! What more could a pair of hunters need?

ROBBIE

A map of the zoo, so we can plan the kidn...

BRIAN

... the trip to the zoo. Have you got a map Mum?

ALICE

No, I don't think...

SARA

What about the zoo's website? Is your computer on the internet?

BRIAN

No, it's on Dad's desk.

Alice and Sara laugh. The boys remain serious and share a look, puzzled about the laughter.

ALICE

Yes it is. Good idea.

SARA

I'll sort it for them.

INT. THE BALL POND - DAY

A short while later. The boys, submerged in the ball pond, are looking at a stylised map of the zoo that Sara has printed off for them.

BRIAN

Look, there's the Hippo House.
It's surrounded by water.

ROBBIE

Good job that we've got a canoe.

BRIAN

Yes ... but ...

He sticks his feet in the air, so that his legs are emerging from the ball pond. Robbie does the same. They look at their feet for a few seconds.

BRIAN

Wrong feet? I haven't got any
other feet.

ROBBIE

Maybe if we swap they'll be on the
right feet.

They solemnly swap boots, one foot at a time. So that Robbie now has a pair of boots on the wrong feet. They lie down again, heads and bodies submerged in the ball pond, feet resting on the lowest stair.

Kirsty walks down the stairs. She sneers at the two pairs of feet. Just then two pairs of hands emerge from the ball pond, one pair holding the map, the other holding a pair of binoculars through which he is looking at the map.

Kirsty snatches the map and the boys sit upright, feet still resting on the bottom stair.

KIRSTY

What's this? Oh! The Zoo? Still
planning your stupid kidnap?

BRIAN

Shhhhh! We're not ...

KIRSTY

I'm going to tell. (*shouting*) Mum?
Have they told you about their ...?

Brian laughs, a false and slightly hysterical laugh.

BRIAN

Ha ha ha - no! no! ha ha ha!
Hahahah! NO! HA HA HAHAAAAHA...

KIRSTY

(*still shouting*) plans to kidnap...

BRIAN

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA HA HA ...

ROBBIE

(*also shouting*) You had a
cigarette today Kirst?

BRIAN

(*still hysterical*) Hahahahaha..

Kirsty stops her tale telling.

KIRSTY

Oh, shut up you stupid shitty
little kids!

(beat)

Your boots are on the wrong feet
Robbie and you ...!

She stuffs the map into Brian's mouth.

KIRSTY

... sound just like a dog throwing
up his dinner.

Kirsty storms off. The boys sit up, Brian with the map in
his mouth, and look at Robbie's feet, puzzled.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Two weeks later. The day of the trip to the Zoo for the 'Hippopotamus Day'. Brian and Robbie, dressed in their hunters' gear, are filling the paddling pool. They hear a vehicle arriving.

BRIAN
Granddad!

The boys run into the house.

INT. SITTING ROOM - DAY

A few seconds later. Vince is sitting with Alice on her bed. Joe gives her a hug. The boys run in to the room.

JOE
You two have a lovely day together.

ALICE
Oh, we will. Nice lunch, lots of time to chat, drop of wine maybe.

VINCE
Kirsty? Time to go!

Kirsty is upstairs. She shouts down.

KIRSTY (O.S.)
Don't want to go. Do I have to?

VINCE
Yes! You're going, we've had this argument already. And I won!

KIRSTY
Dad! Pleeeeease! I'll stay in my room, leave you and Mum in peace.

VINCE
You're going.

Kirsty stomps downstairs, enters the sitting room, sulks.

KIRSTY
I'm not going to talk to anybody.

JOE
Not even me?

KIRSTY

No.

ROBBIE

Ha ha! You just did!

Kirsty pushes him.

ALICE

Kirst? Pass my purse would you?

Kirsty gets Alice's purse.

ALICE

Here you are ...

She gives Kirsty some cash. Kirsty is stuck between feeling sulky and feeling pleased.

ALICE

That's for your cigarettes.

Kirsty starts to protest.

KIRSTY

Mum! I don't ... who? ... you little ...

She turns on Brian and Robbie. They back off.

KIRSTY

Should I tell your little secret?

ALICE

They didn't tell, you just smell of nicotine all the time! And as for their "secret" - pretending to kidnap Amber for me - I've overheard something about it.

She smiles at the boys.

BRIAN

Just pretend.

ALICE

I know.

KIRSTY

They're stupid! They think it's going to be a real kidnap.

ALICE

Kirsty, when you were six you pretended to be pregnant, just because I was. And when I brought Brian home, you showed me your baby. It was invisible to everyone but you and it did everything that Brian did.

BRIAN

Did it?

ALICE

Yes.

(beat)

It was called Ryan.

Kirsty's hard shell begins to crack. She is now the 12 year old with a dying mother.

KIRSTY

Mum...

ALICE

You and I will have some time alone together soon. Meanwhile, maybe the boys will manage to kidnap Amber. At least I'd get to see her!

Alice winks at Kirsty. The boys are delighted at this "acceptance" of their plan.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE HIPPO ENCLOSURE OF THE ZOO - DAY

It is an hour later. Brain, Robbie, Joe and Kirsty walk under a sign : 'HIPPO AWARENESS DAY' and into the exhibition room. A ZOO GUIDE, in a hippo mask greets them.

GUIDE

Good afternoon and welcome. Here are your hippo masks. Look! Everybody's wearing them.

The boys survey the scene with their binoculars.

GUIDE

Everybody looks the same huh?

KIRSTY

Stupid idea.

BRIAN
Everybody looks the same!

ROBBIE
Everybody looks the same!

BRIAN
Perfect!

INT. 'HIPPO AWARENESS DAY' EXHIBITION ROOM - DAY

Brian, Robbie and Joe make their way around the room. Nearly everybody is wearing a hippo mask.

Kirsty does not join in and does not wear her mask.

The Director of the Zoo, MIKE ROBINSON, wearing his mask, brings the room to order. Brian, Robbie and Joe stop beside a life-size cardboard cut-out of Amber.

MIKE ROBINSON
Good Afternoon and welcome.
(beat)
Today's fundraising event is in aid of our breeding programme. As you know, a pygmy hippo was born here recently. She is not yet on public show and, sadly, her mother died a few days after the birth.
(beat)
However, we have plenty of photos of her for you to look at.

His speech continues, projected images of Amber illustrate his talk.

The formalities bore Brian and Robbie, they wander away. They open a door marked "*Private. No Entry.*" They enter.

INT. HIPPO ENCLOSURE, OBSERVATION / MEDIA ROOM - DAY

The room is dark. AMBER stands under a dim light on the far side of the room. She looks directly at them. She is actually behind reinforced glass, but the boys don't see the glass.

BRIAN
It's Amber!

ROBBIE
She's waiting for us!

BRIAN

She's smaller than I thought.

ROBBIE

We could easily take her.

BRIAN

Too many people out there.

ROBBIE

That's good! If she walks between us they won't notice her.

BRIAN

Yes, we could disguise her with a mask and if anyone asks, say that it's our little brother.

ROBBIE

Disguise a hippo with a hippo mask?

BRIAN

Yes, our little brother the hippo. Nobody will guess. Come on!

They rush across the room, crash into the glass and bump their heads. They remove their masks and look at Amber.

BRIAN

She's not scared. She likes us.

Amber moves closer to the glass and looks at the boys. Then she skitters away and back towards the glass again.

BRIAN

She wants to play Robbie. Look!

Amber does the appealing skittering movement again. The three of them charm each other for a few more seconds.

BRIAN

Hi Amber, I'm Brian. Want to play?

Robbie taps on the glass. Amber moves over to him.

ROBBIE

Hello Amber.

Brian spreads the palm of his hand on the glass. Amber sniffs at it.

BRIAN

She likes us Robbie. She really likes us.

ROBBIE

Do you think that she wants to come with us?

BRIAN

Of course she does. Can't you tell?

ROBBIE

You want to come with us. Don't you?

The hippo skitters again. This convinces the boys.

BRIAN

We need to get her out of there.

Robbie rubs his head.

ROBBIE

But how? We can't break that glass. It's very hard.

BRIAN

There's a door here. Come on.

INT. NON-PUBLIC AREA OF THE HIPPO ENCLOSURE - DAY

Through the doorway, they find themselves in the 'behind the scenes' area of the hippo enclosure. Through thick bars, they see the herd of hippos that are in the moated open-air enclosure on public view.

ROBBIE

Look how big they are!

BRIAN

I know. I bet they're heavier than a double-decker bus!

ROBBIE

But Amber was tiny.

BRIAN

Yeah. Those grown up ones can be very fierce as well.

ROBBIE

Fierce? And frightening?

BRIAN

Yes, and look how thick the bars
are! And those locks on the doors!

(beat)

I bet they're childproof.

ROBBIE

Look! Water! A river! We'll
definitely need the canoe.

BRIAN

But we would have to get past
those big, fierce hippos to get to
the water.

Brian gives up.

BRIAN

It's impossible. We can't do it.
But ... hang on, I know this place!

He opens a door into an office. They enter.

INT. THE HIPPO KEEPERS' OFFICE - DAY

On a desk are photos of Brian's family. It is Alice's desk.
There is a vase of flowers and a card, made by a child.

BRIAN

Look! I made that card when Amber
was born. Mum sent these flowers!
Maybe we can ...

Brian's resolve has returned. He takes a flower from the
vase. The door opens and a woman enters. She is NELLE
DANES, a hippo keeper and a colleague of Alice's.

NELLE

What? Who? Brian? What are you
doing here?

BRIAN

I wanted to see Amber, for Mum.

NELLE

Are you here alone?

BRIAN

No, Robbie's with me.

NELLE

I mean who brought you?

BRIAN
Granddad Joe and Kirsty.

NELLE
Come on, let's go find them.

ROBBIE
What about seeing Amber?

Nelle takes the flower from Brian and fixes it onto his clothing. She pulls the boys' masks over their faces again.

NELLE
We'll see what we can do.

INT. HIPPO ENCLOSURE, OBSERVATION / MEDIA ROOM - DAY

Nelle, Brian and Robbie enter. A TV CAMERAMAN is checking the light levels. Amber is hiding. Mike Robinson and JOSEPHINE DEANY, the TV reporter, are trying to catch a glimpse of her through the glass.

JOSEPHINE DEANY
We need to get her on camera.

Brian and Robbie, unseen, go over to the glass and peer through it with their binoculars.

JOSEPHINE DEANY
A blank pane of glass is very boring.

BRIAN
Very boring.

ROBBIE
Very, very boring.

MIKE ROBINSON
We could try to tempt her.

BRIAN
Tempt her.

ROBBIE
Sugar-free lollipops.

BRIAN
There she is. Behind that bush!

MIKE ROBINSON
Who are you?

Overlapping dialogue:

BRIAN
 Brian.
 ROBBIE
 Robbie.

They remove their masks and Amber comes out of hiding.

JOSEPHINE DEANY
 Perfect! Great shot! Very
 appealing. We could do our
 interview in front of the boys and
 the hippo. They're so cute!

Nelle groans silently and raises her eyes.

NELLE
 Mike, Josephine ? This is Brian
 and Robbie.
 (beat)
 Brian is Alice's son Mike.

MIKE ROBINSON
 Ah, yes. Brian's mother was the
 head hippo keeper.

JOSEPHINE DEANY
 Was?

The TV camera now has a clear shot of Brian and Robbie in the foreground and Amber close to them in the background. Josephine Deany indicates to the cameraman to keep filming.

MIKE ROBINSON
 Yes - she, er, she's ...

BRIAN
 ... very ill.

ROBBIE
 Yes. She was going to die, but
 we're going to make her as good as
 new with the ...

BRIAN
 ... *telling* her all about Amber.

Nelle whispers to Josephine who looks sympathetically at Brian. She is also aware of the camera.

BRIAN
 Amber's Mum died.

JOSPEHINE DEANY

Yes. She must feel very sad.

BRIAN

Not just sad ... I ... it's ... I know
'sactly how she feels.

JOSEPHINE DEANY

Do you?

BRIAN

Of course I do. Can I ask a
question to tell the television
how she feels?

JOSEPHINE DEANY

Well, yes...

BRIAN

Can I say it now?

JOESPHINE DEANY

Yes, go ahead.

Brian takes the flower that Nelle had attached to his clothing and holds it up to the camera. Then he looks straight into the camera.

Brian stands very close to the camera - the monitor next to Josephine shows that his features distort on screen by being so close. The cameraman tries to pull back, Brian follows. Josephine Deany indicates to the cameraman to let Brian do it his way.

Brian holds the flower closer to the camera. He looks straight into the camera and plucks the petals off the flower head then speaks.

CUT TO: same room - a few minutes later.

They have finished filming. Brian, Robbie, Josephine Deany, Mike Robinson and the cameraman remain. Nelle has gone.

JOSEPHINE DEANY

Well, that was great boys. Your
story about the flower will be on
TV tomorrow, Brian, probably just
after lunch.

ROBBIE

What about my story about the
chair?

BRIAN

Yes, his story has to be on TV,
not just mine!

JOSEPHINE DEANY

Robbie, your er ... story was a
little surreal ...

ROBBIE

It is real!

BRIAN

And somebody might watch and have
the answer!

JOSEPHINE DEANY

Do you know what? You're right!
Yes. We will put your story on
with Brian's.

ROBBIE

Yes!

INT. THE HIPPO KEEPERS' OFFICE - DAY

A few minutes later. There is a young man, MARTIN GROGAN,
16 years old, waiting in the hippo keeper's office. Brian
and Robbie enter followed by Mike Robinson.

MIKE ROBINSON

Martin, this is Brian and Robbie -
did Nelle tell you about them? We
moved Amber from the Observation
Area into her pen, and these boys
have ...

MARTIN

... special access to her.

BRIAN

Really?

MIKE ROBINSON

Yes. When Nelle gets back with
your Granddad and sister, she and
Martin will take you in to meet
Amber and to take some photos for
your Mum.

BRIAN

Can we go in by ourselves?

MIKE ROBINSON

Oh no, no, no, no, no. No, I don't think so. Anyway, I have to get back to the reception now. Say hello to your Mum from me.

He leaves.

BRIAN

Martin? Robbie and me, well, we could go and stay with Amber while you wait for the others.

MARTIN

No. We have to go together.

BRIAN

I know the way. I've been with Mum.

MARTIN

NO. They'll be here soon.

ROBBIE

We could take Amber for a walk while you wait for the others.

Martin laughs.

BRIAN

Or maybe if you take Granddad and Kirsty first, then let me and Robbie go in alone, it would be OK because ...

MARTIN

No! We'll go together. There's no way that you'll be allowed to be alone with the baby hippo. Ever!

ROBBIE

But we have to ...

The door opens, Nelle enters with Kirsty.

NELLE

Have to what?

BRIAN

Visit Amber alone. Just me and Robbie.

NELLE

Oh no, we'll all go together and just for a few minutes.

KIRSTY

They've got this stupid idea to kid...

She sees Martin and her attitude changes from sneering to giggly in an instant.

KIRSTY

Oh, its, hi, I ...

NELLE

This is ...

KIRSTY

Martin Grogan.

NELLE

He's ...

KIRSTY

In Year 11.

NELLE

... on a work placement with us. Do you know each other?

Overlapping dialogue:

No.	MARTIN	KIRSTY
		Yes. Same school.

MARTIN

Oh.

KIRSTY

I'm in Year 7.

MARTIN.

Mmm.

KIRSTY

I'm Kirsty.

MARTIN

Mmm.

BRIAN

Where's Granddad

NELLE

Oh yes! He's bringing an old ice cream cart to the side door.

ROBBIE

Ice cream?

KIRSTY

Stupid old cart. Broken. Was being thrown away.

She rolls her eyes in disgust. She is speaking for Martin's benefit, trying to be grown up and 'cool'.

ROBBIE

Ice cream?

NELLE

The Zoo Shop had chucked it. He said it has good parts for your go-cart or something.

Kirsty snorts and shakes her head.

MARTIN

A go cart? Cool.

KIRSTY

Yes! We have one that ...

BRIAN

An ice cream cart. Perfect!

ROBBIE

Ice cream?

NELLE

Well yes Robbie, actually he did buy some ice cream to take home in the cart. Come on. Let's go and find him. Bring the camera will you Martin.

Brian and Robbie run out of the office ahead of Nelle.

KIRSTY

I like your camera.

MARTIN

It's the zoo's. For staff only.

KIRSTY

Can you show me how to use it?

MARTIN

No. It's for staff only.

KIRSTY

You're probably very busy.

MARTIN

Yes.

KIRSTY

Cool. I like your sweatshirt.

MARTIN

It's crap. It's just the uniform.

He takes the sweatshirt off and throws it on a chair. His name label is sewn into the collar.

KIRSTY

Mega crap.

MARTIN

Come on!

They leave the office.

INT. NON-PUBLIC AREA OF THE HIPPO ENCLOSURE - DAY

Nelle opens an external door; Joe enters pushing an ice cream cart. Typical of the push-around carts used in zoos, fairgrounds etc, it is basically a fridge set on its side and on wheels. It has a large door on one of the long sides for replenishing the stock and a lift-up serving hatch on top.

It also has a megaphone which for the vendor to attract customers.

JOE

Look what they were throwing out!
The wheels and the frame will be
great for a go-cart.

KIRSTY

Oh yes! Especially the wheels.
Just what we need.

Her enthusiasm puzzles Joe and the boys.

KIRSTY

Granddad, this is Martin, a friend
from school.

BRIAN

Look! It has a door on the side.

JOE

That's where they put in the boxes
of ice cream.

ROBBIE

Ice cream?

BRIAN

Baby hippos love ice cream.

NELLE

Well, not really.

BRIAN

My Mum said so.

KIRSTY

Mum's a hippo expert, Martin.

Brian opens the door on the side of the cart.

BRIAN

I could get in easily. Look
Robbie.

ROBBIE

Is there any ice cream.

BRIAN

(whispering) The baby hippo! In
here! Kidnap! That's what I'm
thinking about.

ROBBIE

I'm thinking about ice cream.

The boys stick their heads into the side door of the cart.

KIRSTY

Kids !

MARTIN

Can't stand them ...

KIRSTY

Duh! No!

MARTIN

We had some year 8's from St Luke's the other day, immature brats the lots of them.

KIRSTY

Oh ... I ... well yes, some Year 8's can be.

JOE

Don't get in there Brian - it's a fridge. No air if the door shuts.

Kirsty tries to draw Martin aside. Two parallel conversations take place for a minute or so.

KIRSTY

Do you want a fag?

BRIAN

No air?

MARTIN

Huh?

JOE

No air. You couldn't breathe.

KIRSTY

A cigarette?

BRIAN

So something would die in there?

JOE

Yes. Probably within minutes.

MARTIN

I don't smoke, and girls who smoke stink.

BRIAN

Within minutes?

JOE

It's very, very dangerous.

KIRSTY

Stink?

ROBBIE

Very dangerous?

MARTIN

Yeah, stink. S-T-I-N-K stink!

JOE

Unless the hatch on top is propped open slightly.

He points at the serving hatch on top of the cart.

BRIAN

Ah!

JOE

Maybe I should remove this seal, here, on the side door. It's already loose.

NELLE

That'll make it safe. Best thing to do.

The seal comes away easily.

JOE

Got it! There. Now it's safe.

BRIAN

Safe now? Something could live in there?

JOE

Well, it's still freezing, it should stay cold enough to get the ice cream home.

ROBBIE

Ice cream?

BRIAN

Freezing?

NELLE

Oh yes, I forgot. Look, I've got zoo sweatshirts for you all. Hippo-coloured, to go with your masks! They'll keep you warm if you decide to get inside there for some strange reason!

BRIAN

Perfect. Thank you.

MARTIN

Give her one. She thinks they're cool.

KIRSTY

No I don't. Fine for kids, but...

Martin ignores her.

KIRSTY

...anyway! My form master says that some Year 7's are much more mature than most Year 8's.

JOE

What?

MARTIN

Mr Dunlop said that? Huh! Right!

KIRSTY

Yes.

MARTIN

He's a dickhead.

NELLE

Martin!

ROBBIE

Mr Dunlop Dickhead !

Kirsty makes one last attempt to impress Martin.

KIRSTY

Yeah, he's a dickhead. I prefer Mr Charles.

BRIAN

But, you told Rachel that Mr Dunlop is yummy!

Martin snorts at this. Kirsty pushes Brian.

JOE

Should we go and see Amber now?

Brian drags Robbie aside. The following conversation between the boys is secretive. Whispered with glances over their shoulders towards the others who are at the gate to Amber's pen.

BRIAN

We have to get rid of the others.

ROBBIE

I know what, kill 'em all!

BRIAN

No ! Shut up.! Be serious now. We need to sneak Amber into the ice cream cart.

ROBBIE

Without them seeing us do it?

BRIAN

Yes.

ROBBIE

Without Kirsty telling?

BRIAN

Yes!

ROBBIE

Get Amber into the ice cream cart?

BRIAN

Yes!

ROBBIE

And they won't see that Amber's gone until we've escaped?

BRIAN

Yes !

ROBBIE

Then push the cart to the van and get it into the back of the van without anyone knowing that Amber is inside?

BRIAN

Yes.

ROBBIE

That's impossible.

BRIAN

Mission Impossible !

ROBBIE

Let's just do it!

PRETEND PLAY : to the "Mission Impossible" theme tune, Brian and Robbie are suspended above Amber's pen looking down at the others. Robbie is holding the life-size cardboard cutout of Amber. They swiftly and silently lower themselves, Brian grabs the real Amber, Robbie replaces her with the cardboard cut out.

The kite from their hunter's kit is attached to the cardboard cut out hippo to ensure that it moves occasionally as if it is a real hippo.

They return to the roof of the hippo house and jump onto the back of an adult hippo down in the enclosure. They use the hippos as stepping stones to get to the water. Then the canoe gets them across the water to where the souped-up ice cream cart is waiting, jets roaring, to get them away from the zoo. They fly off.

INT. AMBER'S PEN - DAY

Meanwhile, Nelle and Martin open the gate to Amber's pen and Kirsty and Joe have their photos taken with the hippo.

NELLE

Brian? Robbie? Come on boys.

They look at her with guilty but wide-eyed and open expressions, as though they have been caught doing something they ought not to be doing.

NELLE

You ok?

BRIAN

Just playing.

NELLE

Playing?

ROBBIE

Mmmm, thinking ...

Nelle gestures to the boys to join her in Amber's Pen. As they draw near to her Brian sees the radiophone on Nelle's belt. He sees the number clearly written on the casing.

INT. NON PUBLIC AREA OF HIPPO ENCLOSURE DAY

BRIAN

Come on Robbie. Let's just do it!

Brian gets his walkie-talkie out and "calls" Nelle's radiophone. It does not actually call her, but it does cause interference on her phone. Nelle looks at it, tries to use it but she can't because of the interference.

NELLE

Someone must be trying to call me.
I'll, er ... Martin? Shut Amber's
gate for a minute - I'll be back.

She leaves.

MARTIN

OK.

Brian looks at Martin's radiophone then "calls" that number. There is static interference again.

MARTIN

Hello? Hello? I can't hear
anything.

BRIAN

That's what happened to Nelle
isn't it Robbie?

ROBBIE

What?

BRIAN

The phone call. You know Robbie?
That urgent call that Nelle got,
but then she couldn't hear it
properly.

ROBBIE

Oh yes, something urgent happened.

MARTIN

Did she say what?

BRIAN

Everybody who works in the Zoo has
to go...

JOE

She said "*shut Amber's gate*"

BRIAN

...has to go after they've shut all
the animal's gates of course.

Martin ushers Joe and Kirsty out of Amber's pen and shuts
the gate. Brian watches Martin him very carefully.

MARTIN

Did she say what the problem is?

ROBBIE

An escaped elephant!

MARTIN

But, the elephant house is on the
other side of the zoo!

ROBBIE

Yes! I know! Better run.

BRIAN

We've to wait here ...

KIRSTY

I'll go with Martin.

MARTIN

No! Don't want you tagging along.

Brian "calls" Martin's radiophone again. Martin tries to
answer through the static.

MARTIN

They need me!

Full of importance, he dashes off.

KIRSTY

Tagging along! Pig! I hate him!

She bursts into tears. Joe comforts her.

BRIAN

Take her to Mum's office. We'll
talk to Amber through the gate.

JOE

Well...

BRIAN

S'OK. Martin fastened the gate.

KIRSTY

Martin Grogan! I hate him.

She wails again and Joe takes her off.

JOE

Come on Kirsty, let's go and sit
in the office. You'll disturb the
animals with all that wailing.

They go around the corner and into the office. Robbie
climbs up onto a bale of straw.

BRIAN

What are you doing up there?

ROBBIE

Just covering ...

BRIAN

Oh, come on!

Brian examines the gate to Amber's pen. The bolt is on the
inside. He can't reach it. He twists around to get more of
his shoulder through the bars. He can just touch the bolt
now. But not open it.

ROBBIE

It's probably childproof and I'm
hungry. Do you want a lollipop?

BRIAN

Childproof. Mmmmmm. Let's see.

(beat)

A lollipop? Yes! Maybe I can reach
the bolt with a lollipop.

He uses the lollipop to extend his reach and manages to
move the bolt. He turns it - but is unable to slide it.

ROBBIE

Brian!

He points at Amber as she walks towards the gate.

Brian pulls his hand back. Then has an idea. He unwraps the
lollipop and holds it next to the bolt.

BRIAN

Come on Amber. Here. Nice
lollipop. Sugar free.

ROBBIE
She's coming!

BRIAN
'Course. Wants to come with us.

Amber at the gate, grabs and eats the lollipop.

BRIAN
Quick, another.

ROBBIE
Orange! My favourite. Here. I'll
take the wrapper off.

Brian wedges this lollipop behind the moving part of the bolt. Amber starts licking it. The bolt moves and opens within seconds.

BRIAN
She wants to come with us. She
really does!

ROBBIE
She does, she does! She opened the
gate. Not us!

BRIAN
Not us! No! We didn't do it! Come
on then!

Amber emerges into the corridor, Brian opens the door in the side of the ice cream cart and Robbie gets on top, opens the hatch and holds another lollipop inside the cart. Amber steps up into the cart and Brian shuts the door.

BRIAN
We've got her!

Robbie is watching her through the hatch.

ROBBIE
She's eating the ice cream!

The boys laugh. Kirsty appears behind them. She clutches a zoo uniform sweatshirt and sulks.

KIRSTY
Oh what now!

ROBBIE
Amber's in the cart.

KIRSTY

Duh! Why?

BRIAN

For Mum. To take her home to visit Mum! We've got Amber for Mum. To make her as good as new.

KIRSTY

You're so stupid.

She flounces around the corner, back towards the office.

KIRSTY

I'm going to tell Granddad.

ROBBIE

Martin will get into trouble!

A quiet and dramatic pause then before Kirsty reappears.

KIRSTY

What did you say?

ROBBIE

Just that Martin will get into trouble if Amber's gone.

BRIAN

Yes, he was left in charge.

KIRSTY

Trouble? Cooooooooool.

(beat)

Was there an escaped elephant?

ROBBIE

No.

KIRSTY

Then we'll have to be quick.
They'll be back soon.

Convinced, Kirsty takes charge.

KIRSTY

OK, here's what we do. Brian, tuck the sweatshirts around Amber to keep her warm and put a hippo mask on top of her so that anyone opening top of the ice cream cart will see the mask.

BRIAN

OK.

KIRSTY

Robbie, you put this sweatshirt, it's Martin "Creepfart" Grogan's, in Amber's pen. Just to make sure he gets the blame.

ROBBIE

I know! Put your cigarettes with Creepfart's sweatshirt as well.

KIRSTY

Brilliant Robbie! Here. Do it.

BRIAN

Amber's fast asleep.

KIRSTY

OK, so you two set off with the ice cream cart, I'll go get Granddad.

JOE

I'm here. What's happening.

The children freeze not knowing how much Joe has seen or heard. Kirsty keeps her cool.

KIRSTY

Martin just popped back and said we might as well leave, Granddad. Amber's ...

JOE

Yeah. I heard. She's fast asleep. Such a shame that you boys didn't get your photos taken with her.

BRIAN

Oh, well, we saw her.

ROBBIE

Yes, and tonight we're going to ...

BRIAN

... be on TV with her tonight, er ... tomorrow!

JOE

What?

KIRSTY

Tell us later! We should go! I'll just leave a quick thank you note for Nelle.

She indicates Martin's sweatshirt and her pack of cigarettes to the boys, she wants Joe out of the way while she 'plants' them.

BRIAN

Come on Granddad.

KIRSTY

See you at the van.

EXT. PUBLIC AREA OF THE ZOO - DAY

There are various groups of people looking at the animals. Brian, Robbie and Joe push the ice cream cart.

JOE

This cart's heavier than before.

BRIAN

We've put our sweatshirts and masks in there.

ROBBIE

And there's the ice cream.

JOE

I didn't buy that much ice cream!

BRIAN

It's not so heavy, Robbie and I can push it together.

They can. But it's a struggle.

BRIAN

I know, let's use the rope so one of us can pull.

He gets the rope out of Robbie's backpack; attaches it to the front of the cart and the boys hold one end each, lowering their heads to put all their effort into pulling the cart. Joe is still suspicious. He opens the lid and looks inside.

JOE

Why is it so heavy?

Brian doesn't see what Joe is doing.

BRIAN

It's alright. Look we can do it.

JOE

Maybe if we redistribute the weight ...

BRIAN

Do what?

Brian looks up. Joe peers inside the cart.

BRIAN

No!

JOE

Maybe we could move ...

Robbie opens the side door to the cart, crawls inside and sits on top of what looks like a pile of sweatshirts and masks. He pokes his head out of the open lid.

JOE

Oh, were you in there? That's why ... but ...

BRIAN

That's why it was heavy!

ROBBIE

She's asleep.

JOE

Who?

BRIAN

Kirsty, yeah, I bet she's fallen asleep in Mum's office.

JOE

No. I can see her coming. Look! Who were you talking about? Who's asleep?

Kirsty arrives; she sees Robbie's head sticking out of the cart, hears what Joe says and takes charge again.

KIRSTY

They mean Amber of course.

Overlapping dialogue:

JOE

OK. All stay together. Promise?

KIRSTY

Promise.

BRIAN

Promise.

ROBBIE

(muffled) Promise.

JOE

See you at the gate.

He leaves. Kirsty opens the side door of the cart.

KIRSTY

Robbie, get out. We can't push you and Amber.

ROBBIE

It's nice in here.

KIRSTY

Out!

Robbie gets out. His mouth ringed with ice cream.

BRIAN

Robbie ! You've been eating ... ugh!
You stink.

ROBBIE

No, Amber stinks, not me.

KIRSTY

Eeeuw! You smell just like her now. Come on.

They make their way through the Zoo heading for the gate.
Kirsty's phone rings.

KIRSTY

Hello? Who? Martin! What? What!

BRIAN

What?

KIRSTY

Shhhhhh...*(listening)*...

(beat)
(whispering)...he got my number from Mum's ... *(she listens then speaks into her phone)* ... what?

(beat)
(whispering again) They've already discovered that Amber's gone!

ROBBIE
 Do they know it's us?

BRIAN
 Shut up!

Kirsty flaps her hand at them to be quiet while she listens to Martin. She smiles, covers the mouthpiece again and says to the boys.

KIRSTY
 Martin's in trouble. They found his shirt and the cigarettes, they don't believe that he shut the gate. He ... *(into the phone)* what !
 Oh ...

The call ends.

KIRSTY
 We're in trouble. There's a security camera above Amber's pen. The the kidnap, will be on tape.

BRIAN
 I knew it was a hopeless plan. We'd better give ourselves up.

ROBBIE
 It's OK. I put paper over the camera.

Overlapping dialogue:

	BRIAN	KIRSTY
You did!		You did what?

ROBBIE
 Yeah, I saw the camera and took a wrapper from the lollipop, climbed on some straw and put the paper over the camera.

KIRSTY

Robbie, you're so cute.

She kisses him, to his disgust and Brian's amusement.

They turn their attention back to the cart just in time to see Amber stepping out of it. She looks at them, a little startled, and then skitters towards them before running away. She can't run very fast.

KIRSTY

Uh-oh! OK, I'll run beside her with the cart, to hide her from view. You run ahead and stop her.

Brian and Robbie run and stop a couple of feet in front of Amber. She also stops, skitters at them playfully, then turns 180° and runs in the opposite direction. Kirsty turns the cart and runs with her. Amber turns 180° yet again and runs towards Brian and Robbie.

BRIAN

Quick! Lollipop!

ROBBIE

Here you are.

BRIAN

That's what she wanted. Look!

Amber eats the lollipop, including the stick; steps back into the ice cream cart; and settles down to sleep.

KIRSTY

Close one! But she's sitting on the sweatshirts. She'll get cold.

BRIAN

The survival blanket! In my backpack. Get it Robbie.

Robbie fishes the survival blanket out of Brian's backpack and they tuck it around Amber.

KIRSTY

What made you bring that?

BRIAN

Gets cold at night in the wild. We've got everything we might need.

ROBBIE

Lollipops, binoculars, kite, nuts,
rope a folding canoe.

KIRSTY

A folding ...? You're a pair of
crackpots. And you really do stink
Robbie. Come on!

They set off once more for the Zoo entrance.

KIRSTY

Don't rush, don't want to look
suspicious.

BRIAN

Uh -oh!

KIRSTY

What?

BRIAN

Enemy ahead.

They see Martin and Nelle at the gate, their backs to
Brian, Robbie and Kirsty. Martin looks around. He doesn't
see them, but they decide to change their course.

KIRSTY

This way!

They find themselves in the children's "Petting Zoo" area.

EXT. CHILDREN'S PETTING ZOO - DAY

BRIAN

Kirsty! We came here for Mum's
birthday last year. Remember?

KIRSTY

Yeah. You were frightened of the
chicks. Some big game hunter!

Kirsty has separate conversations with each of two boys for
the next half a minute or so.

ROBBIE

What's that man doing?

KIRSTY

He's milking the goat.

BRIAN

I'm not really a big game hunter.
Am I?

ROBBIE

What's that underneath the goat?

KIRSTY

'Course you're not really a big
game hunter, you were only
pretending weren't you?

ROBBIE

What *is* that thing Kirsty?

KIRSTY

It's called an udder.

BRIAN

I was pretending to be a hunter.
But what I really am is a thief.

KIRSTY

A thief?

ROBBIE

My Dad has one of those, but his
is smaller.

BRIAN

I didn't kidnap Amber, I stole her
didn't I? I'm a thief.

Brian realises the truth of his actions. In this moment, he
loses some of the innocence of childhood.

BRIAN

I'm a criminal!

They hear Martin's voice at the other side of the hedge
surrounding the Petting Zoo, he argues with Nelle. The
three of them draw closer to the hedge.

MARTIN (O.S.)

They must still be in the Zoo! And
I know that they took Amber.

NELLE (O.S.)

But why would they take a
hippopotamus?

NELLE

Let go now, Martin. You're in enough trouble already. Leaving a gate open - taking a cigarette break - not watching the animals ...

Martin lets go of Kirsty.

MARTIN

But!

NELLE

Martin, are you going to go by yourself, or should I call Security?

MARTIN

But!

NELLE

Come on now. Out! I need to help with the search for Amber.

ROBBIE

Where is Amber?

NELLE

Probably hiding somewhere. We'll find her; or she'll appear when she's hungry.

Kirsty gives Martin a self-satisfied stare. It makes him suspicious.

MARTIN

What's in the ice cream cart.

BRIAN

Amber of course.

NELLE

Martin - leave - now!

MARTIN

But he just said ...

NELLE

He's winding you up. Can't you see that.

Martin storms off.

KIRSTY

(shouts after him) Creepfart! *(to Nelle)* I hope that you find Amber soon. You don't really believe that someone would take her?

NELLE

No. It would take a genius to get one of our animals out of here. Where would you hide an animal the size of a 5 year-old child?

(beat)

Under your coat?

(beat)

In a bag?

BRIAN

In an old ice cream cart?

NELLE

Yeah right! Oh, by the way, Joe's waiting for you at the gate.

KIRSTY

Granddad! Come on boys.

They leave the Petting Zoo.

EXT. THE ZOO - DAY

They walk through the Zoo, past visitors and staff without further incident. They arrive at the Zoo's exit. There are people leaving through the gate. Two uniformed zoo SECURITY GUARDS are watching everybody closely.

BRIAN

Kirsty! Look! The army is going to search us!

KIRSTY

It's not the army, just security guards, they always stand at the gate. Not interested in us.

Just then, the Security Guards do appear to become very interested in the three of them. One of the guards walks towards them, the other talks into his radiophone.

SECURITY GUARD 1

Excuse me, but have you three just come from the Hippo enclosure?

ROBBIE

No, from the Petting Zoo where we saw an udder just like my Dad's but bigger.

SECURITY GUARD 1

I, what? Udder? I ... Are you Kirsty?

KIRSTY

Yes.

SECURITY GUARD 1

Just wait here please.

He walks towards his colleague calling out :

SECURITY GUARD 1

It's them.

EXT. THE ZOO'S MAIN ENTRANCE / EXIT - DAY

BRIAN

What shall we do?

KIRSTY

I don't know.

ROBBIE

I know! We haven't used the folding canoe yet.

BRIAN

The gate's open. We could make a run for it.

ROBBIE

Or kill 'em!

Brian delivers the following in a "superhero" voice, as though he is quoting it from a movie or a cartoon.

BRIAN

"I'm afraid that we might have to, second-in-command, in order for this mission to succeed."

ROBBIE

Second in command?

(beat)

Are we going to pretend something?

BRIAN

Yes! Let's pretend that the
Guard's a giant squid which ...
(pause)
... which ...

ROBBIE

Yeah? Which ... we trick ...

BRIAN

No.

ROBBIE

No?

BRIAN

No more pretend. This is real.

ROBBIE

No, he's a real giant squid ...

BRIAN

No! This is real, and we are real
thieves and we will get arrested
and go to prison forever.

ROBBIE

I don't want to play that game.

BRIAN

It's not a game. No more games.

KIRSTY

No, Brian, look. Stay cool. Look!

The Security Guards walk towards them. The second Security
Guard has a huge bunch of flowers that he has collected
from inside the small office at the gate.

SECURITY GUARD 2

These are for your Mum.

SECURITY GUARD 1

From everybody at the zoo.

Brian and Robbie hold the rope and Kirsty is ready to push
the cart.

SECURITY GUARD 1

Where shall I put them? Your hands
are a bit full?

SECURITY GUARD 2

Why not in here?

He opens the hatch on top of the cart. His colleague puts the stems of the flowers into the opening.

KIRSTY

Thank you. Mum will love them.

Thank you. Bye. Come on boys pull.

They leave the zoo.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE ZOO - DAY

There is a distinct chomping noise from inside the cart and the bunch of flowers moves as it is pulled from within. Joe, who has been waiting outside the gates, sees the flowers moving.

They walk towards Joe's van, which is parked close by.

JOE

What's happening to those flowers?

Kirsty grabs the flowers; Amber's snout appears momentarily through the hatch before Kirsty slams it shut.

One flower drops to the floor. Brian picks it up.

KIRSTY

Nothing! They're for Mum.

JOE takes the flowers and points to the chewed-up stems.

JOE

But what happened to them?

ROBBIE

They were chewed by ...

BRIAN

The goat in the Petting Zoo.

JOE

Oh, yes, well goats eat anything.

Joe puts the flowers into the back of his van.

The TV van pulls up; Josephine Deany gets out.

JOSEPHINE DEANY

Brian! Robbie! Great! Look, we're going to do another piece for the

news about Amber being lost. I'd like you to be in it...

KIRTSY

We've got to go ...

JOSEPHINE DEANY

Yes dear. Just wait there. I'm ... ah! Here's Nelle. Perfect.

Nelle arrives at the gate.

JOSEPHINE DEANY

OK Nelle, what do you want to say about Amber's disappearance?

NELLE

Nothing. Not now. Maybe tomorrow. I don't want to dramatise it. She's probably just hiding and fast asleep. She'll be back when she's hungry.

Martin peeps around the side of the TV van. He hides and watches the proceedings.

JOSEPHINE DEANY

And tomorrow will you talk about her planned move to San Diego?

KIRSTY

Move! Another Zoo? Nelle, Mum wouldn't like that.

NELLE

Well, it was always planned ...

KIRSTY

She belongs here. No! she can't go. Mum wouldn't want that. She...

Joe has walked back to the group. Martin edges towards the ice cream cart.

KIRSTY

Granddad, they're going to take Amber away. To San Diego!

Kirsty starts to cry.

JOE
San Diego?

KIRSTY
Mum wouldn't want that.

NELLE
Kirsty, it's what we ...

During this conversation, Martin edges even closer to the ice cream cart.

KIRSTY
No! Mum wouldn't want it! Amber exists because of her!

JOE
Come on Kirsty.

KIRSTY
No! Granddad, it was Mum's last project before she had to give up her job.

JOE
You're right! She's right Nelle, the hippo breeding project here was Alice's passion for over a decade. You can't just...

Martin reaches the ice cream cart and opens the hatch. He points inside.

MARTIN
She is in here! I told you so. Here's Amber!

NELLE
Oh Martin, not that again!

KIRSTY
Get away from there Creepfart!

BRIAN
That's our ice cream cart.

ROBBIE
Time for the folding canoe.

MARTIN
Amber is in here!

Brian, Kirsty, Nelle, Josephine, the Cameraman and the Security Guards move towards Martin and the cart.

Joe and Robbie get to him first.

JOE

I'll just move this.

He swings the cart around so that it is at right angles to his van, the side door is in the same orientation as the back of the van; the doors at the back of the van are open.

Martin is wrong-footed and he lets go of the hatch, which slams shut.

Robbie offers Martin the folding canoe.

ROBBIE

Take this Martin.

MARTIN

I ... hey ...

ROBBIE

Take it! This is not pretend.

Martin takes the canoe.

ROBBIE

Unfold it! This is real.

Martin tries to get around the cart. Joe is in his way.

MARTIN

Amber's in ...

Robbie grabs the megaphone from the ice cream cart, stands next to Martin and points the megaphone at Martin's ear.

ROBBIE

*UNFOLD IT MARTIN! UNFOLD IT!
UNFOLD IT! UNFOLD IT!*

Everybody is slightly disorientated by this noise, Martin extremely so. He unfolds the canoe. It really is a folding toy canoe, and is about sixty centimetres long.

MARTIN

Alright! Alright! Shut up! Look! look, I've done it! But, Nelle, please, just look in the cart.

BRIAN

No!

Kirsty is crying; Nelle, Josephine, the Cameraman and the Security Guards are moving closer. A small crowd of onlookers has gathered.

Martin becomes almost hysterical.

MARTIN

See! See! They don't want you to look inside! She's in there!

NELLE

Martin, you were told to go home.

ROBBIE

PUT IT ON YOUR HEAD! PUT IT ON YOUR HEAD! ON YOUR HEAD! ON YOUR HEAD! ON YOUR HEAD! ON YOUR HEAD! ON YOUR HEAD! ON YOUR HEAD!

Brian joins him on the megaphone and chants with him.

Overlapping dialogue:

BRIAN

ON YOUR HEAD! ON YOUR HEAD! ON YOUR HEAD! ON YOUR HEAD!

ROBBIE

ON YOUR HEAD! ON YOUR HEAD! ON YOUR HEAD! ON YOUR HEAD!

A Security Guard approaches Martin.

SECURITY GUARD 2

Go on, son, go home.

BRIAN AND ROBBIE

ON YOUR HEAD! ON YOUR HEAD! ON YOUR ...

The other Security Guard takes the megaphone away.

BRIAN AND ROBBIE

... head.

JOE

Oh, just do as you are told, Martin.

Joe means that he should do what Nelle and the Security Guard told him to do; but Martin, confused, frustrated and deafened, puts the un-folded folding canoe on his head. Brian and Robbie 'high-5' each other.

Kirsty laughs. Joe notices this.

JOE

That's better. Now I will look to check for any stowaways inside my ice cream cart, if that's OK with you Nelle?

NELLE

Oh, I'm sure that it's not really necessary.

JOE

Nevertheless, I shall look.

The elated mood of Brian, Robbie and Kirsty suddenly changes to despair. The game's up.

Joe opens the hatch, peers inside, smiles and pulls out a hippo mask and the two sweatshirts.

JOE

There's your hippo!

He looks inside again, then puts his head fully inside. Brian raises himself onto his tiptoes to see Joe better. He sees Amber's rear end, tail wagging, disappearing around the back of Joe's van. Nobody else see this. Joe removes his head from the cart.

JOE

Not much ice cream in there either. Robbie! It is smelly though. Goat I think.

KIRSTY

That would be the goat we saw at the Petting Zoo.

ROBBIE

Yes. The goat with four big willies.

JOE

But there's no Amber in here.

BRIAN
Definitely not in there!

The group breaks up. Nelle and the Security Guards go into the Zoo. Josephine and the Cameraman drive away. Martin walks away wearing the canoe on his head, after a few seconds he pulls it off and throws it away. Kirsty laughs again.

Joe moves to the back of his van. Brian, Robbie and Kirsty follow him. They look inside to see Amber happily eating the flowers.

INT. BACK OF JOE'S VAN - DAY

Brian climbs inside and kneels down next to Amber.

KIRSTY
Granddad?

JOE
There were some buns in a bag, I hoped that she'd smell them and be tempted. Well, it seems like she's eaten all the buns ...

ROBBIE
Oh, not all of them!

JOE
Yes, and now the flowers.

KIRSTY
But Granddad?

JOE
It was obvious that you had her Kirsty. Martin must have seen her in here. Why would he lie?

KIRSTY
But why didn't you tell them?

JOE
All that talk about sending her to San Diego? And you so upset? Well, I moved the cart and opened the side door for her hoping she'd go up the ramps into the van.

BRIAN

Time to take her to Mum.

JOE

OK. Let's get this cart in there.
And perhaps we should buy some
more flowers on the way home?

BRIAN

No, Amber will be enough of a
present for mum. Anyway, I've
saved a flower for her.

KIRSTY

It's still got all its petals!

BRIAN

I don't pull petals off anymore.

ROBBIE

And he doesn't pretend anymore.

INT. KIRSTY'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Two hours later. Kirsty, Brian and Robbie wait.

BRIAN

Will we be able to see Mum after
the doctor's gone?

KIRSTY

Dad said she might be asleep.

ROBBIE

Can we take Amber to visit?

KIRSTY

Not until Dad's in bed.

Joe enters.

KIRSTY

What's wrong with Mum?

JOE

She's just very tired. It happens.
(beat)
I think that maybe we should call
the zoo? Take Amber back?

BRIAN

No!

KIRSTY

We've got her this far Granddad,
let Mum see her at least.

BRIAN

Come on Robbie, let's ask your Mum
if you can sleep over. And then go
to the garage to feed Amber.

ROBBIE

Ice-cream?

They rush out of the room.

KIRSTY

Is Mum OK?

JOE

No better, but no worse. She
really is just over-tired. She's
going to be pretty doped up
tonight though. The Doctor has
given her some morphine.

KIRSTY

We'll have to keep Amber overnight
Granddad. Mum has got to see her
after all this!

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

After midnight; boys asleep. Kirsty enters and wakes them.

KIRSTY

Come on. Dad's gone to bed at
last. I'll get Amber from the
garage. Meet you in Mum's room.

Kirsty and Brian creep downstairs. Robbie uses the slide
and makes a noisy landing in the ball pond.

INT. HALLWAY, FOOT OF THE STAIRS - NIGHT

Brian and Kirsty freeze for a few seconds until it seems
that Vince has not heard.

KIRSTY

(whispers) One more move like that
and you're going home.

ROBBIE

(normal voice) But I ...

KIRSTY
(whispers) Shut up stupid!

ROBBIE
(wails) I'm hungry!

Vince's bedroom door opens. Brian drags Robbie into the kitchen. Kirsty waits at the bottom of the stairs. Vince goes to the bathroom, the toilet flushes, he goes back to his bedroom. Kirsty joins the boys in the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

KIRSTY
(whispers) You're such a baby
 Robbie.

Robbie eats a biscuit and smiles.

BRIAN
(whispers) It's OK now. Eh Robbie?

Robbie nods.

KIRSTY
 I'll get Amber and meet you in
 Mum's room.

INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

Alice sleeps. The boys enter, talk in a "stage" whisper.

BRIAN
 Shut the door, there's a draft.

ROBBIE
 Where's a giraffe?

ALICE
(mumbles) Giraffe?

The door opens again. Kirsty enters with Amber.

KIRSTY
 She's made a bad smell in there!

During the following scene, Alice is vaguely aware of their voices through her morphine haze. She does not know that Amber is there and thinks that the children are talking about her.

Her responses throughout are mumbled, the children do not hear her.

ALICE

Smell?

KIRSTY

She's had diarrhoea.

ALICE

Oh!

BRIAN

Her bottom looks very clean though.

ALICE

Uh?

ROBBIE

Hee hee, bottom!

ALICE

My bot ... m?

BRIAN

Should we wake her up yet?

KIRSTY

In a minute. Let her (*nodding at Amber*) explore the room a bit.

ROBBIE

She's a greedy pig!

ALICE

Uh?

ROBBIE

She ate so much ice cream!

BRIAN

She might be sick everywhere.

KIRSTY

Or even diarrhoea again.

ALICE

Vinn...nn...?

KIRSTY

She's just like a baby, being sick and poo-ing everywhere.

Brian, Robbie and Kirsty look closely at Amber. Alice thinks that they are talking about her.

ROBBIE

Look! She's got a lot of little hairs on her face.

KIRSTY

Mmmmm. Not very pretty!

BRIAN

Pretty ugly! Hah! Her nails are filthy dirty.

Alice's eyes flicker open briefly to look at her hand, which is on the pillow next to her face. Kirsty notices.

KIRSTY

Mum? You awake?

Alice murmurs and drifts off again into semi-consciousness.

BRIAN

How long can we keep her here?

KIRSTY

Only one night.

BRIAN

Yeah, because she smells a bit.

ROBBIE

She pongs!

ALICE

Uh? Hnnn! V...v...?

Brian hears Alice and strokes her hair.

BRIAN

Mum? Mum? Bring her closer.

Kirsty encourages Amber over to the bed.

BRIAN

Ugh! Her breath stinks as well.

ALICE

Bri...? Wha...?

BRIAN

(to Alice) Are you awake? We've got a surprise for you. *(to Amber)* Come on smelly - ugh, did you just fart? Oh - oh - ugh! Kirsty...! She just made the worse smell ever!

KIRSTY
We'll definitely take her back to
the hospital tomorrow.

Overlapping dialogue:

ALICE	KIRSTY
<i>Hospital?</i>	I mean Zoo.

ALICE
Vince?mmmmh

Alice is a little more aware for a few seconds, but is confused and never fully awake.

ALICE
Brian?

BRIAN
Mum, we got her for you!

ALICE
Vince?

KIRSTY
We've got a surprise for you. Oh!
Amber isn't tall enough.

BRIAN
We can lower the bed. Robbie -
that button.

KIRSTY
I'll hold onto Amber.

BRIAN
And I'll make sure Mum keeps her
eyes open.

He gently pulls Alice'S eyelids open.

Alice's POV : her gaze is fixed because Brian is holding her eyes open; her vision is blurred; the bed slowly lowers; Kirsty is leaning forward towards Alice who sees Kirsty's face, then her neck, chest and waist. Then she finds herself face to face with Amber. She stares, confused. The baby hippo nuzzles her face with her mouth.

BRIAN
(*shouts*) Mum! Amber kissed you!

Alice's eyes close. She is asleep once more. Kirsty ushers the boys from the sitting room into the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

BRIAN

I did it!

ROBBIE

We did it!

BRIAN

We did it! We did it! Mum saw Amber!

KIRSTY

Shhhh! Maybe she saw her, but I don't think she'll remember.

BRIAN

Why?

KIRSTY

She wasn't really awake.

BRIAN

Well, she can see Amber again tomorrow.

ROBBIE

Where *is* Amber?

There is a noise from the kitchen.

ROBBIE

Ah! Getting something to eat.

They move towards the kitchen. There is a noise from upstairs. Doors opening and closing.

VINCE (O.S.)

Kirsty?

(beat)

Kirsty?

KIRSTY

(*whispering to the boys*) Quick!
Into the kitchen. (*calling to VINCE*) Down here dad.

Brian and Robbie enter the kitchen. Vince comes downstairs.

VINCE
You OK Kirst?

KIRST
Just wanted to peep in on Mum.

VINCE
Me too. She asleep?

KIRSTY
Fast asleep.

VINCE
I'll just look in on her now I'm
here. See you tomorrow.

KIRST
OK. 'night.

She goes upstairs. Vince enters the sitting room.

VINCE
Alice! Oh God, Oh no! Kirst!

Kirsty rushes to the sitting room.

INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

Vince is cradling Alice on the floor.

VINCE
She was on the floor. Oh God! She
must have fallen out of bed.

KIRSTY
What shall I do?

VINCE
Call ... call ... the hospital.
(beat)
No! She's so cold!
(beat)
I'm going to take her to hospital
straight away.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

It is the next morning. Brian and Kirsty sit at the table.
Joe has been on the telephone, he replaces the handset.

JOE
She's OK. She's warmed up and
she's awake. But she's going to be

in hospital for a few days, maybe
a week.

BRIAN
But did she mention Amber?

JOE
Nnnh?

KIRSTY
Did Mum tell Dad whether she saw
Amber last night?

JOE
He didn't say so.

BRIAN
He'd have said so if she'd said
so, if she'd said so - said that
she'd seen Amber - Dad would have
said that she'd said that she'd
seen her. So...
(beat)
Wouldn't he?

KIRSTY
She doesn't remember.

BRIAN
She didn't see her.
(beat)
I failed.

JOE
Well, you know, we've done our
best. We'll have to take Amber
back to the Zoo.

BRIAN
No! We have not done out best! Our
best is when Mum sees Amber and
knows that she's seen Amber. She
has to spend some time with Amber.
Then we've done our best.

KIRSTY
But how?

BRIAN
We have to take Amber to visit Mum
in hospital. Yes! That's what we
have to do.

KIRSTY

Crackpot!

BRIAN

What?

KIRSTY

Take Amber into the hospital?
Crackpot!

JOE

*"Blessed are the cracked - for
they let in the light."*

KIRSTY

What?

JOE

Look. Brian's right. We smuggled
Amber out of the Zoo, where she
was expected to be.

(beat)

We got her past that super-
suspicious Martin ...

Kirsty snorts.

JOE

... nobody will expect a kidnapped
hippo to be smuggled into a
hospital.

KIRSTY

Mmmmm ... that's true...

BRIAN

We can do it!

JOE

I agree. Where's Robbie?

BRIAN

Asleep in the garage with Amber.

JOE

OK, Brian, wake him up. Make sure
that he doesn't smell too much.

BRIAN

OK. Have we got a plan?

JOE

Nooooo. Not yet. Let's plan over breakfast. We'll need more help.

BRIAN

Great. I'll get Robbie.

He leaves.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

An hour or so later. Brian, Robbie, Kirsty and Joe are sitting at one end of the kitchen table. Sara and Rachel are sitting at the other end, they are both a little shocked at what they have been told.

The door to the garden is open, Amber wanders around outside. She enters the kitchen.

JOE

So, we all know what to do?

SARA

And you're sure that Alice has a room to herself, this won't work on a ward full of people.

JOE

I'm certain. I checked with Vince. She has a side ward to herself because she needs peace and quiet.

The phone rings, Joe goes out into the hallway to answer it. The others continue talking.

SARA

Peace and quiet? So a visit from a wild animal will not be a problem?

KIRSTY

You know Mum, she'll love it. Even if it tires her out.

SARA

You're right about that. I'm not completely convinced about the whole thing, but you're Mum will love to see Amber.

Joe re-enters the kitchen.

JOE

That was Josephine Deany, she's discussed our plan with her boss. He's agreed to it.

BRIAN

Hurray!

JOE

And she confirmed that yesterday's interview will be on TV today, just after the lunchtime news ...

ROBBIE

Is that us?

JOE

Yes.

BRIAN

he won't say that Amber's missing?

JOE

No, she's not going to mention that. She'll be at the hospital to film Amber's "discovery" and will tell the full story later. That's the deal!

BRIAN

That's the deal!

JOE

Let's get going. Remember, timing is all important!

SARA

OK, here goes. Come on Rachel, the hire shop for us. Let's hope that we can find suitable things at such short notice.

BRIAN

You will.

JOE

Yes, I'll take Brian and Robbie to the hospital and meet you three back here within the hour. Kirsty...

KIRSTY
... will feed Amber, I know.
Hopefully she'll sleep for most of
"Operation Amber"

BRIAN
Operation Amber!

They disperse to complete their various errands and tasks.

INT. HOSPITAL, ALICE'S ROOM - DAY

Later that morning. Alice is in bed. Vince, Joe, Brian and Robbie are also in the room. Brian and Robbie look out of the window.

JOE
I'll be back soon with Kirsty.

ALICE
In time to see Brian and Robbie on
the TV?

JOE
Of course.

The boys whisper to each other. Brian points through the window, to a corridor in another part of the hospital that has windows all along one side. Joe goes over to the boys.

BRIAN
Is that where we'll see them?

JOE
Yes.

ROBBIE
And that's when we say we want to
go to the bathroom?

JOE
Yes. Remember ...

BRIAN
... timing is all important.

ROBBIE
That's the deal!

Joe leaves.

EXT. OUTSIDE BRIAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Half an hour later. Joe's van is full. Alice's wheelchair, medicine trolley and Amber (asleep) are inside. Kirsty, in the passenger seat, waves to Sara and Rachel who are in Sara's car.

KIRSTY

See you in the car park.

SARA

You OK Rachel?

RACHEL

Mmmmmm...

Rachel has a medical support on her neck.

RACHEL

... yeah - it's a bit itchy, but OK.
As long as it gets us in without
being stopped.

SARA

Well, you look convincing.

They drive off, follow Joe's van.

INT. HOSPITAL, ALICE'S ROOM - DAY

It is lunchtime. Joe and Kirsty arrive. Alice, Vince, Brian and Robbie have eaten some lunch.

ALICE

What took you so long? I thought
that you were going to miss
Brian's big moment.

JOE

I wanted to record it.

The TV is already on, it is the lunchtime news program. The volume is low. Joe connects a DVD recorder to the TV.

VINCE

Good idea. Here, we saved you two
something to eat.

He passes sandwiches to Joe and Kirsty. Everybody settles down to watch the TV. Joe turns the volume up. It is the end of the weather report. Then Josephine Deany is on the screen.

JOSEPHINE DEANY (T.V.)

"Yesterday was 'Hippopotamus Awareness Day' at the local Zoo. As well as teaching us more about these mysterious, almost pre-historic, animals - the event was a fund raiser for the breeding program."

Shot of hippos in their Zoo enclosure.

ALICE

Look!

JOSEPHINE DEANY (T.V.)

"The focal point of the day was 5-week-old Amber ..."

A shot of Amber and her mother fills the screen.

JOSEPHINE DEANY (T.V.)

"... a Pygmy Hippopotamus seen here 2 weeks ago with her mother Amethyst..."

ALICE

Amethyst!

JOSEPHINE DEANY (T.V.)

"...sad to report that Amethyst died shortly after those pictures were taken."

(beat)

"Naturally Amber has been very subdued since her mother's death - until, that is, she met Brian ..."

BRIAN

That's me!

KIRSTY

Shhhhh!

JOSEPHINE (T.V.)

" ... and his friend Robbie..."

ROBBIE

Me!

A shot of Amber looking at the boys through the glass - apparently inviting them to play by means of her appealing skittering movements.

JOSEPHINE DEANY (T.V.)

"Brian, in particular, has important links with Amber. His mother was, until her recent illness and retirement, the Head Hippo Keeper. She was present at the birth of Amber's mother and developed the breeding program at the Zoo."

A photo of a slightly younger, much healthier Alice surrounded by hippos.

ALICE

Where did they get that from?

More shots of Brian, Robbie and Amber charming each other.

ALICE

Ahhhhhhhhh!

JOSEPHINE DEANY (T.V.)

"Cute eh?"

(beat)

"Even more moving is Brian's profound understanding of Amber's grief - maybe because of his own mother's poor health."

Brian appears on the TV screen - full face.

BRIAN (T.V.)

"Amber's Mum died."

JOSEPHINE DEANY (T.V. - O.S.)

"Yes. Amber must feel very sad."

BRIAN (T.V.)

"Not just sad ... I ... it's ... I know 'sactly how she feels."

JOSEPHINE DEANY (T.V. - O.S.)

"Do you?"

BRIAN (T.V.)

"Of course I do. Can I ask a question to tell the television how she feels?"

JOSEPHINE DEANY (T.V. - O.S.)

"Well - yes..."

Brian moves too close to the camera, so that his features are distorted.

BRIAN (T.V.)

"Can I say it now?"

JOESPINE DEANY (T.V. - O.S.)

"Yes, go ahead."

Brian takes the flower that Nelle had attached to his clothing and holds it up to the camera. Then he looks straight into the camera.

BRIAN (T.V.)

"Amber is sad - and even though she still likes to play and have fun ..."

He proceeds to pluck the petals off the flower head, holds each one up to the camera for a second, and then drops it. All the time he is looking directly into the camera. When he has finished he holds the denuded flower head to the camera.

BRIAN (T.V.)

"... this is what she really feels like."

He remains very close to the camera, his face and the flower head filling the screen. It is a short, poignant, intense moment. The image becomes a grainy, still shot of Brian's face.

JOSEPHINE DEANY (T.V. - O.S.)

"As Graham Greene said - there is always a moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in. Maybe this is Brian's moment.

(beat)

"... and what could possibly follow Brian's moment ... except, perhaps, this - from his best friend Robbie..."

The grainy still of Brian starts moving again, as though the "Pause" button has been released and Robbie is pushing in next to Brian in front of the camera.

ROBBIE (T.V.)

"Can I ask something now?"

BRIAN (T.V.)

"Yeah - go on then."

Robbie copies Brian by getting close to the camera and speaking directly to it. He speaks very deliberately.

ROBBIE (T.V.)

"What would a chair look like if your knees bent the other way?"

Josephine Deany closes her slot. Joe turns off the TV. The room is silent for a second.

BRIAN

They didn't show our hunter's gear.

ROBBIE

The folding canoe.

VINCE

You were both - great.

BRIAN

You could see right up our noses.

ROBBIE

Bogies!

ALICE

Come here Brian.

Joe gets Kirsty's attention.

JOE

We'll leave you alone for a minute, got to find Sara and Rachel. They're downstairs. They want to visit.

VINCE

Too many visitors!

ALICE

Vince, it's OK. It's OK, I want to see people.

Joe and Kirsty leave.

ALICE

Brian? That was very thoughtful - what you said about the flowers.

BRIAN

It's not a thought! It's a feeling.

ALICE

I know. And very special. Do you ...

BRIAN

(angry) You can't talk feelings - you can talk thoughts, but not feelings.

VINCE

Brian!

ALICE

It's OK, I know what you mean Brian. No need to talk.

ROBBIE

What about the knees and the chair? That's a thought!

ALICE

Yes! That's a big thought. Maybe you'll be a designer when you grow up? Make a chair for people whose knees bend the other way.

ROBBIE

Yes! A designer! I could design something to hide broccoli.

(beat)

A glass of milk doesn't work, I tried that.

INT. HOSPITAL ACCIDENT & EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT - DAY

A few minutes later. Kirsty is pushing Rachel through the Accident & Emergency department. In addition to the medical support on her neck, Rachel has one leg in plaster from hip to foot. They pass the reception desk, watched by the receptionist.

KIRSTY

Just look straight ahead.

RACHEL

Look! The sign says that the elevators are to the left.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

They turn left and bump into a nurse.

NURSE

Whoops! Whoa - sorry! You OK?

KIRSTY

Yes, looking for X-Ray.

NURSE

Ah! Back through A&, turn left.

Kirsty swings the wheelchair around. Rachel has seen a sign for Physiotherapy near the elevators.

RACHEL

Not X-Ray Kirsty, Physiotherapy!
Look, over there, by the
elevators.

KIRSTY

Ah yes! Physiotherapy, I meant
Physiotherapy.

Kirsty swings the wheelchair around again. There is a blanket draped over the back of the wheelchair that hangs down to the floor just in front of Kirsty's feet. Each time she swings the chair Amber's tail, or her back feet, are exposed for a second.

The nurse is suspicious of something.

NURSE

There's no Physiotherapy clinic
today.

RACHEL

Oh, we, er... just wanted to find it
for when ...

Kirsty starts walking quickly towards the elevators. She is too quick for Amber, who stands at Kirsty's feet, half hidden by the blanket, and looks up at the nurse. The nurse does not look down, she watches Kirsty's face closely, suspicious.

NURSE

Do you have an adult with you?

RACHEL

No. But, my Mum's upstairs
visiting her Mum. That's where
we're going now. Ward 17C.

Kirsty sees Amber and pulls the chair backwards so that Amber is underneath it once more. She notices that a man has seen the hippo. She thinks that he will tell, but he smiles and puts his index finger to his lip, then taps the side of his nose. He is drunk and in A&E with a minor drink-related injury.

NURSE

Well, off you go. First floor.

INT. HOSPITAL ELEVATOR - DAY

A few seconds later. Kirsty and Rachel are in the elevator.

RACHEL

That was close.

Suddenly they both react to a bad smell. Amber has had diarrhoea. They leave the elevator gagging on the smell. As she steps out Kirsty turns back into the elevator and presses a button.

INT. HOSPITAL, ALICE'S ROOM - DAY

Joe returns.

JOE

Sara'll be up soon, she's bumped
into somebody that she knows.

From the window Brian and Robbie see the girls leaving the elevator, the girls are holding their noses, obviously against a bad smell. Robbie laughs.

ROBBIE

I bet she's poo-ed!

VINCE

What?

He starts walking over to the window. Joe heads him off.

JOE

You need to go to the toilet
Robbie?

ROBBIE

No.

JOE

Yes you do.

Brian remembers the plan.

BRIAN

Yes! I do. I need to go. Come on
Robbie.

JOE

I'll take them.

Brian, Robbie and Joe leave the room.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDORS - DAY

JOE

This way! Quick! Sara's on time.

They walk quickly along corridors, turning a couple of corners. Sara waits for them near the men's toilets. She wears a white lab coat and has the medicine trolley from Alice's room at home. She's covered it with a green, medical cloth to hide the contents of both shelves.

SARA

So, the girls made it floor?

JOE

Yes, they'll be here any second.

From the top shelf of the medicine trolley, Sara pulls out a couple of bulging carrier bags. She gives them to Joe.

JOE

What did you find ?

SARA

Wait and see! Amber's is already
in there ...

She nods at the toilet door.

SARA

... in the end cubicle.

INT. HOSPITAL, INSIDE THE MEN'S TOILETS - DAY

Joe and the boys enter. They open the door of the end cubicle and look inside. They look down at whatever it is that Sara has put there.

ROBBIE

Wow!

BRIAN

Better than an ice cream cart!

INT. HOSPITAL, OUTSIDE THE MEN'S TOILETS - DAY

The girls meet up with Sara.

RACHEL

Oh God, you won't believe it Sara,
Amber pooped in the elevator ...
ugh! And, oh! ... got to get this
thing off me - it itches.

She pulls the collar off and scratches at her neck. Then she removes the cast from her leg. They hide these theatrical props under the cover on the medicine trolley.

SARA

In the elevator?

KIRSTY

Sara, the boys were so funny on TV, Granddad taped it for you by the way, Brian pulled petals off a flower and Robbie talked about knees and chairs.

SARA

Petals, knees? Chairs?

KIRSTY

You have to see it to believe it.

SARA

But what about the elevator full of, you know?

KIRSTY

Oh, I sent it up to the 7th floor!

SARA

Good girl. Now we need to get the wheelchair, and Amber into the men's toilet.

Kirsty pulls the blanket off the wheelchair.

KIRSTY

She's gone!

SARA

How? Where? When?

KIRSTY

Well, she was definitely in the elevator, and the elevator was empty when I pushed for the 7th floor.

They set off in the direction of the elevator.

Amber skitters out of a doorway and into the corridor. She runs past them. They turn to chase her. A DOCTOR steps out of the same room as Amber.

DOCTOR

Did you just see a ... a dog?

SARA

No.

DOCTOR

Maybe it was a large cat?

KIRSTY

Nope. Nothing.

The doctor shrugs, puzzled. She goes back into the room.

Kirsty, Sara and Rachel turn around, they can't see Amber. Brian steps out of the bathroom to look for them. He points to a spot behind them.

BRIAN

Granddad said to bring Amber in here ... but she just went in there.

He points at a pair of swinging doors that are still moving as though something has just passed through them. Sara opens them and peeps inside. She closes them. The sign above the door says "Ward 14 - Women : Geriatric Medical"

SARA

It's a ward. Full of patients. I didn't see Amber.

RACHEL

What shall we do?

SARA

We have to go in there and get her. But ...

BRIAN

I know, let's visit the patients
and look for Amber.

SARA

Good idea. Girls, you go and tell
Joe what has happened. Tell him to
wait with Robbie in the bathroom.

KIRSTY

OK, then we'll meet you in Mum's
room as planned.

Kirsty and Rachel knock on the men's bathroom door whilst
Brian and Sara go into the ward.

INT. HOPITAL, WARD 14, FEMALE GERIATRIC - DAY

Brian and Sara start walking slowly along the ward. It is
quiet, lunchtime is over, the patients are settling back
into bed. There are three NURSES going about their duties.

BRIAN

I can't see her.

SARA

Don't know where to start looking.

NURSE ONE, standing between two beds, is plumping up the
pillows behind MRS LUMLEY. MRS DYER is in the adjacent bed.

MRS LUMLEY

Nurse! I just saw a hippopotamus!

NURSE ONE

Did you Mrs Lumley?

MRS DYER

I saw a koala bear once.

MRS LUMLEY

Yes, going along under the beds
over there.

MRS DYER

No, in Australia.

NURSE ONE

Got family in Australia Mrs Dyer?

MRS DYER

Yes. I used to visit them at
Christmas.

MRS LUMLEY

The hippo's just gone into the Day Room.

NURSE ONE

There was a song about a hippo at Christmas wasn't there?

MRS DYER

I know it - "I want a hippopotamus for Christmas. Only a hippopotamus will do..."

Brian and Sara walk to the Day Room and enter.

INT. DAY ROOM, WARD 14 - DAY

Five patients, MRS SANDERSON, MRS BOND, MRS HOYE, MRS GATE and MRS PEEL, are sitting watching television. Amber is standing very close to the TV screen. She is fascinated by the movement on the screen. Brian and Sara are unsure what to do. The elderly women are not perturbed by Amber's presence.

MRS SANDERSON

Isn't that the hippo that was on the news?

MRS BOND

Mmmmm, could be. This one looks bigger to me. Nearly as big as the television.

Brian steps forward.

BRIAN

Yes, this is Amber and ...

MRS SANDERSON

You're the boy who was on the news!

SARA

Yes, this is Brian and ...

MRS BOND

Who are you? You weren't on the telly.

SARA

Brian wants to take Amber to visit his Mum, I'm helping him.

MRS HOYE
Does she like humbugs?

BRIAN
Mum?

MRS HOYE
No, the hippopotamus.

Mrs Hoyer gives Amber a humbug - she likes it.

MRS GATES
Why have they sent a hippopotamus
to visit us?

MRS PEEL
It's probably that '*Pets into
Hospital*' scheme dear, they
usually send dogs. To cheer us up.
Make us happy.

MRS BOND
Your Mum's ill?

Brian's following speech is rushed and breathless. He is
feeling desperate at this point.

BRIAN
Yes, and I kidnapped Amber from
the zoo because dad said it'll
make Mum feel as good as new to
see Amber and I thought that he
meant it would make her better but
her didn't mean that it won't make
her better but it will make her
very happy ...
(breath)
... and you see we hid Amber in the
garage then took her to visit Mum
in the middle of the night but Mum
was too sleepy and didn't really
see her then Mum got more sick and
had to come into hospital and now
we've got Amber into the hospital
because Rachel got a broken neck
and leg ...
(breath)
... but not really. And Granddad and
Robbie are waiting in the men's
toilets for me and Amber and then
we are going to take her to Mum's

ward just around the corner and
we'll be on TV again tomorrow ...

MRS GATES

Were you the petal boy or the
knees and chair boy?

BRIAN

... except we're stuck in here and
have to get past those nurses.

MRS BOND

Don't worry, we manage to get lots
of thing past the nurses.

Overlapping dialogue:

	MRS SANDERSON		MRS BOND
Gin.		Gin.	

MRS BOND

Tonic.

MRS PEEL

I hope that Rachel gets better.

MRS HOYE

Come on ladies, we need to create
a diversion. Mrs Bond, Mrs Peel
and Mrs Gates, you all have beds
on the same side of the ward. You
go back to bed and each ring your
alarm, one after the other.

MRS SANDERSON

Yes, then I'll ring the alarm in
here.

SARA

And I'll ask questions as though
I'm looking for a patient on this
ward.

MRS HOYE

Good, and Brian and I will lead
Amber along a trail of humbugs.

The ward is thrown into chaos, with alarm bells ringing and a 'lost visitor' asking questions. Mrs Hoyer, Brian and Amber manage to go the length of the ward unnoticed. Sara joins them a second later.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR OUTSIDE WARD 14 - DAY

Sara and Brian wave goodbye to Mrs Hoyer. Brian and Amber go into the toilets.

SARA

See you in a few minutes.

INT. HOSPITAL, ALICE'S ROOM - DAY

Sara enters.

KIRSTY

Sara's here to see you, and Rachel.

VINCE

Too many visitors!

ALICE

No, it's OK Vince.

VINCE

You're supposed to be enjoying "peace and quiet" remember.

ALICE

Vince, I want to see people. There's going to be plenty of time for "peace and quiet".

VINCE

Alice!

ALICE

Sorry, black humour. Look, Sara and Rachel are hardly likely to over-excite me, now are they?

RACHEL

No. We'll leave that to the next lot of visitors.

VINCE

What?

SARA

Hey, Alice. Kirsty told me about the boys on TV. Sounds cute.

KIRSTY

Weird! They're just weirdos.

ALICE

Well, you know Kirsty, everybody is somebody else's weirdo.

Joe enters. Closely followed by a NURSE; Joe is unaware of the nurse behind him.

JOE

The boys are on their way, with a surprise for you.

NURSE

And what a surprise, all dressed up as ...

Joe turns and sees her.

JOE

What? Did you see ... ?

VINCE

Dressed up?

(beat)

Nurse? Don't you think there are too many visitors here?

NURSE

Well, that's for Alice to decide. I just need to take her temperature and blood pressure.

She goes about her job. Vince fusses over Alice and the others are apprehensive about the presence of the Nurse.

The boys enter. Brian is dressed as Hans Solo and Robbie as Darth Vader. Between them is R2-D2.

NURSE

Here they are. My kids love dressing up. And look at that robot, remote controlled is it?

R2-D2 is moving around tentatively in all directions.

JOE

Not even remotely controlled.

He gently 'wheels' R2-D2 away from the door.

ALICE

Well, you two look - well - just - great! Have you given up playing at Big Game Hunters?

BRIAN/HANS SOLO

Yes,- and kidnapping. We want to do space travel now.

Robbie's Darth Vader costume consists of a full headpiece that is equipped with a voice-changing microphone.

ROBBIE/DARTH VADER

(heavy breathing followed by changed voice) Hi Mum!

R2-D2 does not like this voice and starts moving in small circles, very agitated.

NURSE

Look at that, aren't these toys very sophisticated these days?

Joe stops R2-D2; Vince is looking with suspicion at the 'robot'; Kirsty, Rachel and Sara are pretty dumbstruck, unsure what to do. Alice is puzzled, but smiling.

NURSE

There, all done. See you later Alice.

The Nurse leaves. Robbie/Darth Vader breaths heavily through the voice changer. R2-D2 turns around in circles again.

Nelle enters. Overlapping dialogue:

ALICE

NELLE! What a lovely surprise.

VINCE

NELLE - I, could we ... you just wait a few minutes? There are too many people in here already.

NELLE

No, I'm sorry - but "R2-D2" here is getting a little too agitated for me.

ALICE

What?

Josephine Deany and her cameraman enter. He films the rest of this scene.

VINCE

No, no, no, no, no ... too much. Who are ...?

ALICE

From the TV?

JOSEPHINE DEANY

Yes - we ...

NELLE

Can we explain later Alice?
"R2-D2" needs to be unveiled ...

JOE

Yes, come on Brian; and Robbie -
take that voice-thing-helmet off!

ROBBIE/DARTH VADER

Awwwww!

R2-D2 circles again in reaction to Darth Vader's voice.

BRIAN

Better take it off or your face
won't be on TV.

Robbie immediately takes it off and grins at the camera.

NELLE

Come on Brian, let's take R2-D2
close to your Mum.

Brian and Nelle gently push R2-D2 over to the bed.

ALICE

What is going on?

JOE

Alice, I'm just going to lower
your bed as far as it will go. OK?

ALICE

OK.

BRIAN

We've brought you something It
won't make you feel as good as
new. Won't make you better...

ALICE

Wha ...?

BRIAN

... but will make you happy.

Brian and Nelle lift the R2-D2 costume up to reveal Amber.
Amber and Alice stare at each other.

ALICE

Oh! Oh!

(beat)

Oh! It ... I ...

(beat)

Oh! Ooooooooooh....

(beat)

Oh, ahhhhh...

(beat)

Hi Amber.

Nobody moves for a few seconds. Then Amber moves her nose
towards Alice, as if to smell her. Alice mirrors this
gesture.

ALICE

The smell of hippo breath! Never
thought I'd experience that again.

(beat)

Nelle? Is this OK?

Nelle nods.

ALICE

Help me to sit on the edge of the
bed Vince.

He does, supporting her from behind. Alice sits and Amber
sniffs around her legs, feet and hands. Brian sits next to
Alice. The cameraman is filming. The others are just
watching.

Alice murmurs to Amber some of the others leave the room
one by one. First Sara takes Robbie, Rachel follows them.

ALICE

She's beautiful.

(beat)

Is she doing all right Nelle?

NELLE

She's fine Alice. She's still -
well, she's usually - in isolation
... but , well ...

ALICE

I know ... she was kidnapped?

BRIAN

I stole her mum.

NELLE

Brian just borrowed her for you.
It's OK.

ALICE

This is just perfect Brian.

(beat)

Is she still going to go to San
Diego?

NELLE

Yes. Probably a bit sooner than
planned.

ALICE

That's good.

KIRSTY

Mum! She can't go away. She's got
to stay here.

BRIAN

Got to stay here! We kidn ... sto ...
borrowed her so that ...

ALICE

Well, it was my idea that if
Amethyst had a girl she would go
to another Zoo.

KIRSTY

But, she's your project, she
belongs here -

ALICE

The breeding project is shared
among all Zoos. She should go.

KIRSTY

No! She ...

ALICE

And you'll have to visit her of course.

KIRSTY

Oh! Well! Yes! I will! I will !

JOSEPHINE DEANY

So, Alice, you're happy with the decision to send Amber away?

ALICE

Of course, can't be sentimental around wild animals, eh Nelle? Even if they are "cute".

NELLE

Ooooo, dirty word that! But, she is, isn't she? Cute?

Alice pets Amber a little more.

KIRSTY

San Diego!

Vince is still sitting behind Alice. She tires and leans back on him for support. Kirsty sits next to Vince on the bed and reaches over to touch Amber's nose. Amber is still nuzzling Alice's hand. Brian is sitting on one side of Alice and Joe on the other.

Josephine Deany indicates to the cameraman to stop filming and they leave the room.

ONE YEAR LATER

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE, SITTING ROOM - DAY

The camera pans around sitting room as at the beginning of the film. All the hospital paraphernalia has gone. Joe is sitting alone on the sofa. He is staring at the T.V., which is on but with no volume. His expression is quite blank.

The camera focuses on him for a few seconds. Then something on the T.V. screen gets his attention, he raises his hand. We see that he is holding a remote control. He points it at the TV, but before he presses it he calls out :

JOE

It's on!

Robbie and Sara enter the room. Robbie is wearing a cowboy outfit. Joe turns up the TV volume.

JOSEPHINE DEANY (T.V.)

"How many 6 year olds have kidnapped a wild animal from a zoo; smuggled that same wild animal - a baby pygmy hippopotamus - into a hospital; had his drawings published in a book about children and grief and appeared on a number of television chat shows?"

BRIAN (T.V. - O.S.)

"Only me."

JOE

Hee hee! Typical.

JOSEPHINE DEANY (T.V.)

"Well, obviously he does not need me to introduce him."

(beat)

"Only a year ago Brian Cassell was an unknown 6 year old ..."

BRIAN (T.V. - O.S.)

"Now I'm seven and I've got another wobbly tooth."

JOSEPHINE DEANY (T.V.)

"... who's determination, imagination and positive thinking made his terminally ill mother simply - happy."

The screen angle widens so that Brian, Kirsty and Vince appear on screen next to Josephine Deany. Brian wears a cowboy outfit.

Robbie 'shoots' Brian.

Overlapping dialogue:

BRIAN (T.V.) ROBBIE
"Yes. Happy." Gotcha!

SARA
 Robbie - shhh ...

Robbie 'shoots' Sara and dives behind the sofa.

JOSEPHINE DEANY (T.V.)
"The baby hippo that Brian kidnapped for his mother arrived at her new home in San Diego Zoo this week. Accompanied by Brian, his sister Kirsty and their father, Vince, Amber will meet her new family of pygmy hippos."
 (beat)
"Vince - this trip comes after a very sad and difficult year for your family?"

Robbie pops up from behind the sofa and 'shoots' Vince.

Overlapping dialogue:

VINCE (T.V.) ROBBIE
"Yes, a hard time. we really needed this holiday. I ... it, well, ... you know ..." (making gunshot noises) Phhum! Phhum!

SARA
 Oh, Vince, well done ... Robbie, no!

JOSEPHINE DEANY (T.V.)
"And Kirsty, this trip was something that you talked about with your mother?"

KIRSTY (T.V.)
"Yes, she wanted us to come, to keep a link with the breeding program. And to take some photos for our family album which has more hippos in it than people ..."

Robbie rolls dramatically across the carpet and shoots' Kirsty then Joe. With everybody 'dead' he sits cross-legged on the carpet in front of the TV.

JOE
(nodding) Alice the hippo-aholic.

KIRSTY (T.V.)
"... Granddad always called Mum a hippo-aholic."

JOSEPHINE DEANY (T.V.)
"So, Brian, what are you gong to next?"

BRIAN (T.V.)
"Play cowboys and Indians and outlaws and things."

He aims his gun at the camera and 'shoots'

BRIAN (T.V.)
"Gotcha back Robbie!"

EXT. SAN DIEGO ZOO - DAY

Josephine Deany finishes her slot. Brian runs away from the camera. Vince and Kirsty catch up with him.

The camera follows them, an aerial shot maybe, as they walk through the Zoo.

Vince makes a call on his mobile phone.

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE, HALLWAY - DAY

Joe walks out of the sitting room and answers the phone. It is obvious that he has taken a call from Vince.

He nods, smiles, talks then calls into the kitchen. Robbie comes into the hallway and takes the phone.

EXT. SAN DIEGO ZOO - DAY

Brian is now talking into the phone, evidently to Robbie.

The camera pulls further away until Brian, Kirsty and Vince blend in with other visitors to the zoo.

