

Curfew

by
Shawn Christensen

OPEN ON: A bathtub.

The room is dank -- illuminated by dim fluorescent lights. There are dirty towels strewn across the grimy tiles. A loud DRIP from the leaky faucet is the only sound reverberating.

A telephone begins to RING. The phone is next to the tub, on the floor -- it's cord leads into the darkness of the adjacent room.

It RINGS a few times.

CLOSE ON: The telephone, as a hand enters the frame to pick it up. There's blood on the hand, and a razor blade held lightly between the fingers.

The hand belongs to RICHIE LOGAN, 32, skinny, unshaven, gaunt. He's in a tub of water diluted with blood. A long, deep red cut has recently been etched inside his right wrist. With his other hand, he pulls the phone towards his ear.

RICHIE

(beat)
Hello?

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Richie... I'm in a little bit of trouble here...

Maggie sounds distraught. Her voice sounds desperate.

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

I just... I don't know who to turn to. Something's come up, and... I need your help. I have to take care of something right now, but I don't want to leave Sophia alone. I need someone to look after her for a few hours until I get back.

(beat)

I know we haven't spoken in a while, and you know that you're my last choice on earth to ask to be responsible for anything. But you're my brother and I thought maybe... I'm just so fucked right now. I'm in a fucked up situation and I can't get a hold of anyone. You are my absolute dead last option... but you're also my last hope...

(she gets frustrated)

Can you just do this one fucking thing for me, Richie? Please?

1 CONTINUED:

No response.

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

Say something.

(beat)

Jesus Richie, I know you're not doing anything important. If you want me to beg over the phone, this is it -- this is all I've got. This is me begging you Richie! Can you be over here in twenty minutes and watch her for me? I can't leave her alone... I just can't... Please... please help me... What do you say?

Richie stares blankly -- the blood slowly draining from his wrist. He hasn't felt needed in a long time. Finally:

RICHIE

...okay.

2 **EXT. SOPHIA'S FRONT STOOP -- DUSK**

2

SOPHIA, 9, patiently sits on the front steps, as Richie approaches.

Richie seems a bit awkward -- he's rarely ever around children.

After a moment, Sophia takes out a small piece of paper and hands it to Richie.

RICHIE

What's this?

SOPHIA

It's a list of appropriate places you're allowed to take me. If you bring me somewhere that's not on that list, there'll be hell to pay.

As Richie looks over the list, Sophia hands him a small wad of money.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

This is some money for you to spend on me, and on me only. If you spend it on anything else, like drugs, there'll be hell to pay.

Richie accepts the money and nods.

(CONTINUED)

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

You're not allowed in the apartment until you drop me off at 10:30. If I'm not back home by 10:30, on the dot, there'll be hell to pay.

Richie nods again. After a moment:

RICHIE

Well, now that we got all that out of the way. My name is Richard, and I'm your uncle.

SOPHIA

(beat)

I don't care.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY -- NIGHT

Richie sits across from Sophia, as she PLAYS a video game on her iTouch.

RICHIE

So... what grade you in?

SOPHIA

(not looking up)

Fourth.

RICHIE

(nodding)

You like it? Got some friends?

Sophia shrugs -- clearly not interested in having a conversation.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Sophia, huh?... I used to draw a little bit when I was younger. And I had this one cartoon character, named Sophia. I made these little flip-books -- Sophia on these little adventures. Your mom thought they were funny. She would laugh so much at 'em. She loved 'em.

(beat)

I don't remember anyone else named Sophia growing up. I wonder if maybe your mom... named you after those cartoons? I don't know. Maybe she mentioned somethin' about that...

SOPHIA
 (still not looking
 up)
 My mom doesn't talk about you.

Richie nods -- he understands.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)
 (looking up)
 Actually... she said you're
 passive aggressive.

RICHIE
 Passive what?

SOPHIA
 Passive aggressive.

RICHIE
 (irritated)
 Passive aggressive? What does
 that mean?

Sophia goes back to her game. Richie takes out a
 cigarette -- lights it.

RICHIE (CONT'D)
 You know... there was sort of an
 accident a few years ago. It was
 my fault, and uh, I was never
 allowed to see you again, so...
 I'd really like to get to know you
 a little bit.

Sophia continues playing her game -- ignores him.

After a moment:

RICHIE (CONT'D)
 I need to stop by somewhere real
 quick. Pick somethin' up.

SOPHIA
 Is it on the list?

RICHIE
 (beat)
 It'll take two minutes.

Sophia gives a dead-pan, disapproving look.

Finally:

RICHIE (CONT'D)
 You know what? Fine.

Richie takes the list out of his pocket and quickly
writes something on it with a pen. He hands it over to
 Sophia.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: (2)

RICHIE (CONT'D)
There. Now it's on the list.

4 INT. CRACK DEN / HALLWAY -- NIGHT 4

Richie leads Sophia down a dark, desolate hallway. The walls are lined with graffiti and peeled paint.

Sophia seems nervous as they continue down the corridor, as techno music BLARES from the upcoming room.

RICHIE
Wait right here.

Richie enters the room, and quickly begins small CHATTER with a couple FRIENDS inside.

Sophia peers through the open doorway -- a slice of light crosses her face.

Sophia's POV: Richie getting an item from someone. It's very hard to see anything in particular.

Sophia begins to look sad.

5 EXT. STREET -- NIGHT 5

Sophia is on the verge of tears, pacing around as Richie tries to calm her down.

SOPHIA
I want to go home.

RICHIE
What's wrong?

SOPHIA
(tears swelling)
I want to go home.

RICHIE
Look, I'm sorry.

SOPHIA
You spent the money. I want my mom.

RICHIE
The money? I didn't spend the money.

Richie takes out the wad of money, and shows it to her.

Sophia looks at the money -- skeptical.

Richie then takes out two small memo pads.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

See? I was just pickin' these up,
okay? The flipbooks I was tellin'
you about.

(beat)

That's all.

SOPHIA

(still skeptical)

Why were they in there?

RICHIE

(hesitant)

...I used to live there.

Richie approaches her, and begins flipping one of the books.

INSERT: As the pages flip, the 'Sophia' cartoon character becomes animated.

Sophia begins to smile.

SOPHIA

A piano fell on her head.

RICHIE

Yeah, they're like looney tunes.
Here's another one. See? A
cannonball hits her, and then she
blows up and then she comes back
to life. She always comes back to
life.

SOPHIA

(giggling)

How did you do these?

RICHIE

I was bored, I don't know. I
didn't have Gameboys or 'Angry
Birds' to play all day.

Sophia is immediately surprised.

SOPHIA

How did you know the game I was
playing?

RICHIE

I don't know. I know it.

SOPHIA

You *know* Angry Birds??

Sophia's jaw drops in awe -- shocked that he knows the game.

RICHIE
Yeah, I know, it's amazing. Can
we *not* be in the cold anymore?

6 INT. BOWLING ALLEY / EATING AREA -- NIGHT

6

Richie and Sophia sit at the counter. Sophia is now very interested in her new friend.

Sophia looks on, as Richie smokes his cigarette.

SOPHIA
Favorite number.

RICHIE
Three.

SOPHIA
Favorite color.

RICHIE
Blue.

SOPHIA
What was the accident?

RICHIE
What accident?

SOPHIA
The accident where you never saw
me again.

RICHIE
(beat)
Doesn't matter.

SOPHIA
But I want to know.

RICHIE
Doesn't matter.

SOPHIA
You know what the leading cause of
lung cancer is?

RICHIE
(nodding)
Yeah...

SOPHIA
Then why do you smoke?

RICHIE
It's not as bad as they make it
out-

SOPHIA

Yes, it is.

RICHIE

Not... sometimes.

SOPHIA

All the times.

Richie tries to ignore her.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

You don't look very healthy. Do you take vitamins?

RICHIE

I take drugs.

SOPHIA

Those aren't vitamins.

RICHIE

I know.

SOPHIA

Do you have a girlfriend?

RICHIE

...no.

SOPHIA

Why not?

RICHIE

I don't know.

SOPHIA

Maybe it's because you don't look healthy.

RICHIE

Maybe. Why don't you eat your food, okay?

SOPHIA

Or it could be because of the bad breath.

RICHIE

I don't have bad breath.

SOPHIA

Smoking is one of the leading causes of Gingivitis.

RICHIE

You're really giving me a headache, ya know that?

(CONTINUED)

SOPHIA

You don't take very good care of yourself.

Richie shakes his head in annoyance.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

You should get a girlfriend to take care of you. You clearly can't take care of yourself.

7 **EXT. WOMEN'S RESTROOM -- MOMENTS LATER**

7

Richie patiently waits outside the bathroom, while two WOMEN, (30's or 40's) wait on the other side of the door. The Women JABBER away and GOSSIP as Woman (1) KNOCKS on the door.

RICHIE

(slightly irritated)
There's a little girl in there.
If you can just give her a minute...

The Women don't hear Richie over their own TALKING. They continue to CHATTER and COMPLAIN about other friends of theirs in an annoying manner.

Richie begins rubbing his temples with irritation -- these women seem to be getting LOUDER and more annoying to him. They KNOCK on the door again, and start COMPLAINING about how long it takes for someone to use a bathroom.

Finally, Richie has had it with them:

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Will you SHUT UP? SHUT THE HELL UP!

The Women stop and look at Richie -- shocked.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Shut up! Shut your big. fat. cow. Mouth! SHUT UP! Shut it! Shut the fuck up! SHUT IT!!

Complete silence...

A FLUSH emerges from behind the door. After a moment, Sophia exits the bathroom and turns to Richie.

Richie gently zips up her jacket, and puts on her winter hat for her.

They walk away, leaving the Women standing in stunned silence.

8

INT. BOWLING ALLEY / LANES -- NIGHT

8

Richie and Sophia sit on a bench -- killing time.

The train clock reads: 9:40

SOPHIA

What was the accident?

Richie shakes his head.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

Come on. Please? I want to know.

Sophia gives a cute, sad face, to get what she wants.

RICHIE

Fine...

(beat)

I dropped you.

SOPHIA

You what?

RICHIE

I dropped you, on the floor.

SOPHIA

You dropped me? Why?

RICHIE

You were a baby. I don't know how to hold one of those things. Your arms and legs were flailin' all over the place -- cryin' and burpin'. I wasn't sober... I dropped you on the floor.

After a beat, Sophia begins to smile. Her smile turns into a LAUGH.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

You think that's funny?

Sophia nods, while LAUGHING.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

It's not funny. I thought I did some damage.

Sophia laughs LOUDER.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

You're a sick person, you know that?

SOPHIA

And you're a dumb person. That's the dumbest thing I ever heard.

(CONTINUED)

Richie starts LAUGHING with her.

RICHIE

Yeah. Laugh it up. I didn't sleep for a month after that.

Suddenly... a SONG begins over the radio.

Sophia HOPS up.

SOPHIA

Oh my god, I love this song!

Sophia immediately starts lip-synching the lyrics to the song, and dances to the MUSIC. She's a star. She performs the singing with an imaginary microphone and is filled with life.

Richie looks around for a moment, to see if anyone else notices his nutty niece dancing to the music. He starts to smile -- he hasn't had this good a time in years...

As the MUSIC soars, Richie looks around at other COMMUTERS in the station... he notices that they too, begin to move to the music.

The Commuters shoulders beat to the music, followed by their legs.. their arms... their bodies. They rise up and walk to the music -- move with it. All of them have a blank expression on their face -- as if the music controls them.

But Richie doesn't feel the music... he's not as alive as everyone else in the world...

After a moment, Richie SNAPS out of it when Sophia TUGS at him to dance with her. He shakes his head that he can't dance, when Sophia tugs at him more. After a second, his bloody wrist bandage is revealed.

The music stops.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

What's that?

RICHIE

It's umm... nothing...

Richie looks around -- all of the Commuters are back in their seats, perfectly normal.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

I just... I cut it washing dishes, and...

SOPHIA

I think you need stitches.

Richie looks at his bandaged wound -- it looks bad.

9

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN -- NIGHT

9

Sophia and Richie sit near each other on the train.
Richie is staring off into nothing.

Sophia looks at him -- moves closer to him so she's right
next to him. She smiles -- she trusts him.

10

INT. MAGGIE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

10

Richie and Sophia enter her apartment.

MAGGIE

Honey!

Maggie, 30, and Sophia hug each other.

Richie notices that Maggie has a black eye.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, baby. I'll never leave
you like that again, okay?

Sophia nods.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Let's get you to bed, okay?

Sophia nods and then runs over to Richie -- hugs him.

Richie reaches in his pocket and gets out the 'Sophia'
flipbooks -- hands them to her.

Sophia smiles, as Maggie takes her away to bed.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

(to Richie)
I'll be right back.

As Sophia gets taken away, she waves to Richie, who
slowly waves back until Sophia disappears around the
corner.

As Maggie sees Sophia off to bed, Richie looks around the
apartment a little. He sees a picture of him and Maggie
from when they were kids. He then notices a legal
document, lying on the kitchen table. He pulls away some
file papers to get a better look at it...

It reads: Restraining order issued by New York City

Clearly, something is wrong in paradise.

Richie steps away, as Maggie returns to the kitchen.

(CONTINUED)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I can tell from her face. She's changed from this morning.

(beat)

You got her liking you now.

(laughs to herself)

Of course. Five hours and suddenly you're Mr. Wonderful...

Maggie takes out some cash and hands it over to Richie.

RICHIE

You don't have to pay me.

MAGGIE

Just take the money.

RICHIE

I don't need money anymore-

MAGGIE

Did you talk about me? I bet you did. I'm uptight, I'm strict, I'm no fun, but who the fuck are you?

No response.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

This was a one-time deal, okay? I don't want my daughter having anymore false idols. You know where the door is.

Richie just stares at her, motionless.

Finally:

RICHIE

Fourth grade, PS 198. Scotty Evans and Timmy Knight. They got to me. Sometimes it was a black eye, sometimes they cut me. One day you come down there, and raise up your fist, and knock Scotty square on the chin. Boom, he goes down like a ton of bricks. I never seen anything like it. They said, "you embarrassed that your little sister fights your battles"? I didn't think so. I knew the truth. I had the coolest sister in the world.

(beat)

Then... we grow up. We change... I changed.

(beat)

And you have this girl. This beautiful daughter. And she's one in a million, ya know?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (2)

10

RICHIE (CONT'D)

She's just so smart... and I know a lot of it has to do with her mother being the best of the best. And then I realize that some things never change... You're still the coolest sister in the world.

Maggie swells up -- she's been unfairly taking things out on him.

Richie quietly leaves the apartment -- SHUTS the door behind him.

11 INT. RICHIE'S BATHROOM -- NIGHT

11

Richie enters his bathroom and takes a long look at the tub.

RICHIE'S POV: Blood stains on the rim of the tub -- two razor blades on the floor.

He sits on the edge of the tub, and starts unbuttoning his shirt. When it's unbuttoned, he takes it off.

He re-enters the tub and takes off his bandages -- the long scab on the inside of his wrist is dark and gruesome...

He grabs the razor blade and begins to re-open the wound.

The phone RINGS.

Richie stops cutting. He CRINGES slightly, as the phone continues to RING.

Finally, he gets up to grab the receiver... but UNPLUGS the phone instead -- no more ringing. SILENCE.

He settles into the tub and begins to re-open the wound again... But after a moment, the curiosity takes over -- he gets back up, plugs back in the phone -- it's still RINGING. He answers it.

RICHIE

...Hello?

Slight CRYING is heard on the other line.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

(beat)
Maggie?

MAGGIE

(collecting herself)
Would it be okay if... you came over and looked after Sophia... sometimes? I just...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

11

CONTINUED:

15.

11

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I need some help, you know?...
Maybe Friday afternoons? Or
Sundays?

Richie works up a slight smile. Finally:

RICHIE

Okay.

MAGGIE

Thank you.

CLICK. DIAL TONE.

BLACKOUT