

RUNAWAY

Written by

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INT./EXT. CAR - DAY

ROBERT, (40's) with scruffy hair and beard, sits in the driver seat of an old car. He HONKS the car horn repeatedly.

BRIAN (10), in shorts and a baseball cap, opens the back car door for his sister, SUSAN (13), a petite girl in sunglasses and sandals.

ROBERT

Are you ready for a big surprise?

Both kids sit together in the back seat. Susan grabs pink lip gloss from her purse and applies it.

SUSAN

Dad's visitation day.

ROBERT

No one wants to sit with your "Ole Dad?" Okay, we're going for a hike at Mountain Park.

SUSAN

That's the surprise... that's it?

Susan glances at her father's reflection in the rearview mirror. She shakes her head.

INT./EXT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

The car winds up the steep, rough roads.

Robert turns on the car radio. Music BLARES as the kids put on their own headsets.

Dark clouds hover over the car.

ROBERT

My G - P - S is dead. What a time to lose signal.

Robert pulls the car over in a parking lot next to a park.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Robert and the kids get out of the car and walk up a steep trail.

They disappear into a thick woods.

EXT. WOODS - DAY - LATER

Brian leads. Robert follows, but Susan lags behind.

They continue up a steep embankment.

Dark clouds move in fast.

Susan drags her feet.

SUSAN

I'm going back. No more surprises.

ROBERT

Wait. We'll go down together.  
Remember this turn by the lake...  
Did we go right here?

Susan stops in her tracks and snaps at Robert.

SUSAN

Aren't you supposed to be the  
parent?

ROBERT

It seems like we were here before.  
Did we go in a circle?

Robert scratches his head. He rests on a large boulder.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

(to Brian)

Which way should we go?

BRIAN

Moss grows on the north side, so  
I'll find some and then we'll know.

SUSAN

You're kidding, right?

Brian grabs some rocks and looks at the backside of some big trees. He spots a fluffy, green moss patch. He grabs the moss and points north.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Seriously, did I want to walk in  
circles today? I have things to do.

BRIAN

Look. I found moss.

Brian stuffs his pockets with moss.

SUSAN

You don't think I have a life, do you, Robert?

Susan throws some rocks and stomps towards her father.

ROBERT

A life? That's not fair.

SUSAN

I forgot to ask how you liked the school play. I was the lead. Oh, that's right.

Susan turns and approaches Robert.

ROBERT

I'm sorry, I couldn't--

SUSAN

I made the costume all by myself. Everyone said I looked, "Beautiful, stunning." Rave reviews.

Robert looks at Susan. She folds her arms.

ROBERT

It's complicated.

SUSAN

By the way, we should we do this "lost in the woods" thing more often.

ROBERT

Stop with the attitude. Can't you see I'm trying to work things out?

Robert throws his hands up in the air.

SUSAN

What attitude? This is fun, like the dentist.

ROBERT

Brian, will you tell your sister to stop with the sarcasm.

BRIAN

We're not quite lost yet.

Brian pulls some moss out of his pocket. Stares at it.

SUSAN  
What's Mom going to say, Robert?

ROBERT  
Don't call me, "Robert."

SUSAN  
Okay then, "Bob."

Susan runs ahead down the long trail. She covers her head with her arms. Rain pours down.

Robert runs behind.

ROBERT  
Wait... I'm sorry about the play.

Susan turns.

SUSAN  
It's complicated.

EXT. TRAIL IN WOODS - DAY - LATER

Robert takes a rag from his pocket. Wipes his wet brow.

ROBERT  
People make mistakes. They take the wrong turn in life sometimes.

SUSAN  
Wrong turn. You mean like this?

ROBERT  
It's not the end of the world. We're starting over. This is just a beginning.

Susan turns away from Robert.

SUSAN  
My friends are at the mall. This is the end of the world.

ROBERT  
Susan, give me a chance. Did I ever say your "father was perfect?"

SUSAN  
Who said you're my father?

Susan runs around a corner on the trail.

EXT. TRAIL IN WOODS - DAY - LATER

Robert rests on a boulder. He wipes the rain off his brow.

ROBERT  
(to himself)  
Why did I want kids?

BRIAN  
Dad. Hurry . . . Susan fell.

Brian waves both arms. He wipes mud splatter from his face with his sleeve.

Robert jumps up.

ROBERT  
What now?

Robert slides and trips as he runs down the wet trail.

EXT. STEEP CLIFF - DAY

Susan hangs off a steep cliff.

SUSAN  
Help me, Bob. I don't think I can  
hold on.

Robert climbs on the steep embankment. He gets close to Susan. Mud slides under his feet.

ROBERT  
Don't look down. Look at me. Hold  
my hand.

Susan tightens her grip on Robert's hand. They lock eyes.

SUSAN  
My leg.

ROBERT  
On the count of three, I am going  
to pull you up.

Robert struggles and pulls Susan off the cliff.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
I didn't think I could hold you  
tight enough. Oh my god, blood.

SUSAN  
My leg hurts bad.

Susan sobs.

ROBERT  
You didn't think I was going to  
leave you there... hanging?

SUSAN  
What did you expect?

Susan grabs Robert's shoulder. She sits on a rock.

Robert takes off his shirt. He makes a tourniquet for Susan's leg with his wet shirt sleeve.

He puts his sleeveless shirt back on.

ROBERT  
You were about five when you fell  
off your bike... Hurt your knee  
bad, remember that?

SUSAN  
Hard to wreck a bike at five.

Robert picks Susan up in his arms.

ROBERT  
You're a lot heavier now.

EXT. SMALL PATH IN WOODS

Robert walks the slippery path with Susan in his arms.

Susan rests her head on Robert's shoulder.

BRIAN  
Dad, I know where we are. I was a  
Boy Scout.

Brian asserts himself. Points down the path.

ROBERT  
Your moss theory, Brian, is our  
only hope.

BRIAN  
We are heading north and the car  
should be about a half mile ahead.

Brian leads the way on a mud path.

Robert holds his daughter. He shakes his head.

ROBERT

(to Susan)

It was always hard for me to admit failure. That's what I saw in the mirror... when I was sober.

SUSAN

Did you ever drink vodka? I had a martini at a party. It was awful.

ROBERT

When I was about your age, I got real drunk and fell through glass... Blood everywhere.

Brian runs ahead to the end of the trail.

Robert adjusts Susan in his arms.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

My dad had given me my first drink, "Jack Daniels." I never told you, did I?

SUSAN

I'd like Jack Daniels.

Susan smiles.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Were you okay?

ROBERT

Not really.

Brian waves both arms and points.

BRIAN

Dad, I found the car. It's here.

SUSAN

Did I tell you about the new play I'm in?

ROBERT

(to Brian)

We're coming.

Robert smiles. He walks through the rain and carries his daughter in his arms, her leg bound tight.

FADE OUT.