

ROPE

Written by

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EXT. SUBURBAN FRONT LAWN - DAY

You hear it before you see it. The unfurling **ZIP** of hundreds of feet of **ROPE** cuts through the silence of 8:00am on St. Charles Ave.

It **STOPS** an inch from the ground, no more than five feet from the front door of a modest, split-style suburban home.

Where it **STARTS**; above the house, above ALL the houses in the neighborhood, above the trees and above the clouds beyond our sight. 2,000 ft. of rope **DANGLES** from the **SKY...**

EXT. FRONT DOOR - MORNING

THOMAS GREEN, 40s, tall, tired, appears through the door dressed for a day at the office he thinks he is about to have.

Thomas turns to kiss his wife LISA, 40, short (Thomas has to lean down to kiss her), standing in the doorway in a robe and holding their eight month old son JASON, when Lisa sees it.

LISA

What's that?

Thomas turns to look at the ROPE, ROYAL BLUE and gently swaying back and forth in the middle of his front lawn.

Thomas exits the house and cautiously takes a few steps closer to the rope. He looks down where the rope almost meets the grass, then up, way up, throwing his head all the way back.

Thomas holds his hand in front of his eyes to see past the sun but he can't catch a good look.

THOMAS

I don't know...

LISA

This must be Emma's thing.

Lisa joins Thomas near the rope and calls out to a window just above the front door.

LISA (CONT'D)

EMMA!

EXT. SECOND FLOOR - MORNING

EMMA, the Green's twelve year old daughter, pops her head out of the window. She immediately spots the rope. Her JAW DROPS.

LISA
Hey! Doña Problemas, is this your
doing?

Emma ignores her mom's question and nearly falls out the window trying to see the top of the rope.

EMMA
How far up does it go?

LISA
Be careful!!

EMMA
I'll be right down!

LISA
No, stay in your room! You're still
grounded!

But Emma has already disappeared from the window.

EXT. GREEN HOME - MORNING

Thomas, whose attention has not broken from the rope until now, pulls Lisa in closer and speaks under his breath.

THOMAS
How would she even do this?

LISA
I don't know, how did she pull off
any of her stunts this summer?

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE:

EXT. RIVER - DAY

LISA (V.O.)
Like raft down a river?

Emma holds tightly to a raft made up of empty soda liters and plastic sleds. The river tosses the raft down choppy water which splashes over the sides, drenching Emma. She holds tight as she's rocked from side to side.

Suddenly, she is surrounded by motor boats on both sides. To the left, a group of police officers. To the right, her parents. Thomas puts one foot on the side of his boat and grabs Emma with both hands, lifting her swiftly from the raft.

INT. SEWER - DAY

LISA (V.O.)
... or get into the sewer

Emma makes her way through a DARK, DAMP sewer with a helmet and flashlight, trudging through the waist high sewage.

Emma hears something above her and looks up to see a manhole being uncovered.

Light pours in from above. One by one POLICE OFFICER pokes their heads into the manhole, followed by Thomas and Lisa.

INT. PASSENGER TRAIN - DAY

LISA (V.O.)
... or hop a train?

We follow a porter as he walks down the aisle of a luxury observation car.

The porter leans to the left to drop off a drink, revealing another porter in front of him.

We follow the second porter who drops off a drink on the right, revealing a third much smaller porter.

We follow the third porter until she reaches the very end of the car and stops. Nose up against the door. A hand lands on the tiny porter's shoulders and she turns around. It's EMMA in DISGUISE.

The hand on her shoulder belongs to a police officer. Lined up like dominoes behind him are two more officers, a train conductor and Thomas and Lisa.

END FLASHBACK SEQUENCE:

EXT. FRONT LAWN - DAY

Lisa looks to Thomas for confirmation. He leans in closer to her.

THOMAS

Sure, but this isn't a makeshift raft, ya know? It's... something else.

LISA

She crossed state lines, Thomas.

THOMAS

On the train or in the raft? HEY!!

Thomas looks up to notice Emma has started CLIMBING THE ROPE, and she's already about six feet up. Thomas rushes over, grabs Emma and PICKS her off the rope like an apple off a tree.

EMMA

Wait, wait, wait! Just let me climb a little further! Please!

Thomas places Emma back on the ground in front of the door.

THOMAS

Back to your room. You're still grounded for the sewer.

LISA

Raft.

THOMAS

I thought it was three weeks for the raft?

LISA

Yeah, and then two for the sewer, two for the train, minus a week for straight A's--

Thomas counts the weeks on his fingers.

While her parents work out the conditions of her internment, Emma watches the rope from a few feet away. The way it catches the late morning sun makes it appear GOLD on one side.

Emma runs back in the house, unnoticed by her parents.

LISA (CONT'D)

I just want my kids to be safe. Is that unreasonable?

Thomas puts his arms around Lisa and the baby.

THOMAS

No, no, no. Not at all. 100%
reasonable.

From across the street, the Green's neighbor, PETE, 50's, balding, polo and khaki shorts, waves down the family and walks over. Pete is much more excited to see the Green's than they are to see him.

PETE

Hi Thomas! Hi Lisa!

LISA

Hi Pete.

THOMAS

Hey, Pete.

PETE

New rope?

THOMAS

It's not our rope, Pete.

LISA

We're not sure where it came from.

Pete gives the rope a look up and down. He put both hands above his eyes trying to see the top.

PETE

Could this be one of Emma's, uhh,
little adventures?

THOMAS

No, we ruled that out.

PETE

Well, I got a eight-foot ladder in
shed. I can bring it by. See if we
can get this guy down.

LISA

Oh! Would you, Pete? That would be
great.

PETE

Sure thing. I'll be right back.

Pete lightly jogs across the street and back behind his house.

Thomas leans in close to Lisa.

THOMAS

How the hell is a ladder going to help?

Lisa moves so her entire body is in front of Thomas. She grabs the rope with one hand, the other still holding the baby. She holds unblinking eye contact with her husband.

LISA

I don't know how, but this thing is coming down **today**.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Thomas' head nearly hits the glass lamp above the breakfast nook as he talks into the phone. His knuckles rap on the kitchen counter as he fights off the phone cord swaying toward him.

THOMAS

...So, it doesn't look like I'm going to be able to make it in... We're not sure if it's dangerous... Well you know Lisa, we're not taking any risks... I don't know... I don't know...

Emma slides in next to Thomas at the kitchen counter. She grabs a bowl and pours herself some cereal. Then she grabs a mug and pours herself a cup of coffee.

With bowl and mug in hand, Emma makes her way to the breakfast nook, but not before Thomas can grab the mug of coffee from her grasp.

Emma doesn't lose a step and sits down with her cereal at the nook.

Thomas takes a sip of the coffee, which he nearly spits out on his third--

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I don't know! It's a rope!

Thomas nearly break the blinds spreading them open with is fingers. He looks out the window at the rope. The rope looks back at him.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

It's blue and it's right there, right there on the front lawn.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

And it's huge and it goes all the way up, you can't even see the top of it, all the way up into the sky... Yeah... alright, bye.

Thomas punches the phone back into the cradle. He turns to Emma but he doesn't say anything.

EMMA

There's probably something really cool up there.

THOMAS

Yeah, probably.

Thomas and Emma live in the "**PROBABLY**" for a beat.

Bill catches Pete through the window out of the corner of his eye walking up to the house with his ladder.

Thomas swiftly makes his way out the door, then he quickly runs back in.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

As soon as you finish your cereal back to your room.

Emma CRUNCHES her cereal. Thomas bolts back out.

EXT. FRONT LAWN - DAY

Pete stands at the TOP of his eight foot ladder. He has one hand securely on the rope and another shading his eyes in lookout position.

Thomas canters out of the house and joins Lisa on the lawn and Jason sitting in a saucer close by.

PETE

This is a real puzzler.

LISA

Well, what do you think, Bill?

Bill looks down at the Greens.

BILL

I think you better call in professionals.

INT. EMMA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Emma watches her parents and Bill from her window, head in hands.

Straight ahead she can see the rope, royal blue with only the open sky behind it. Her head bobs back and forth with the swinging rope, the two of them DANCING.

Emma jolts up. She jumps to the side of her bed and pulls out a tool box from underneath. She begins to sift through the tools and other odds and ends in the toolbox.

The sound of CARS pulling up to the house pulls Emma back to the window.

Emma watches as THREE POLICE CARS and an ambulance pull up to her house. She ducks under the window, out of sight.

EXT. FRONT LAWN AND STREET - DAY

COPS SWARM the area, putting down FLARES and TAPE.

SMALL GROUPS have formed on both sides of the street just beyond the PERIMETER.

COP #1 reaches for another flare and realizes he's out.

COP #1

I swore I brought more of these...

SGT. BOYER, older and rounder than the other police officers, surveys the area. He passes officer #2 and #3 pulling the rope with all their strength. Over their shoulders, from the front, throwing all of their weight on it. The rope will not budge.

BOYER

Good work, boys.

Boyer meets the Thomas and Lisa on their front lawn like two familiar thorns in his side.

BOYER (CONT'D)

Alright, where is she. At the top?
Hello! Little girl! You up there?

THOMAS

Believe it or not, this has nothing
to do with Emma.

EMMA (O.S.)

Hi.

Boyer looks up to the window above him. Emma waves. Boyer looks back at Thomas and Lisa with eyebrows raised.

BOYER
That you know of.

Boyer and the Greens watch as one cop pulls the rope as hard as he can to no result. The rope slips from his grasp as he falls face first to the ground, bringing the cop to his right down with him.

The rope swings back to home position.

BOYER (CONT'D)
I'm going to call a few more guys.
Big guys. They'll get this thing
down. Got any coffee?

Boyer doesn't wait for answer and walks away to commune with the three other officers, all huddled around the rope.

Lisa watches from a distance. She stares down Boyer as her lip curls. A CLANG from above catches her attention.

Lisa looks up to see a HANGER tied to a BROOM HANDLE peaking out of Emma's window. The hanger loops around the rope and the broom handle starts to retract.

LISA
I see that!

The hanger UNLOOPS from the rope and quickly disappears.

EXT. GREEN HOME - DAY

The CROWD around the house continues to GROW. People PUSH and SHOVE and YELL to try and get a better look at the rope.

A local news van cuts through the crowd aided by two cops.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

ON A TV SCREEN we see a Channel 2 news broadcast showing a story about the rope. Close ups of the Green's house and the rope are shown.

The channel changes and it's the same thing.

The channel changes again and it's the same thing.

The channel changes again and it's the same thing, except in Spanish.

We reveal that Lisa is the one flipping through the channels, standing in the living room, bewildered.

LISA
This is insanity...

Thomas joins Lisa in the living room with a plate of sandwiches. He hands her one.

THOMAS
The house looks nice on TV.

Lisa rolls her eyes and takes a huge bite of her sandwich.

Emma sits at the top of the stairs, holding her laptop screen-out to show her parents.

EMMA
Cave paintings were found in a backyard in Michigan! An extinct species of bird was found living in a birdhouse in Colorado. There is a phenomenon happening at our house and they're going to wreck it!

Thomas hands Emma a sandwich.

THOMAS
Well this is a phenomenally good P.B. and J.

Emma rolls her eyes, but grabs the sandwich and takes a huge bite.

LISA
Should we call my mom to take Jason?

THOMAS
I'm not sure how'd she get in. Or we'd get out.

Thomas gestures to the crowd outside.

EMMA
(food in her mouth)
I'm not going to the Grandma's!

THOMAS
No, you're not. After meal time it's back to your cell block.

Lisa changes the channel again. The screen shows the reporter standing right next to the rope, holding it. Behind her, in the picture window, you can see the backs of Thomas and Lisa.

Lisa shifts to the right. The Lisa on TV shifts to the right.

She shifts to her left. Again, the Lisa on TV shifts with her.

Thomas turns around and knocks on the window, catching the attention of the reporter.

EXT. FRONT LAWN - DAY

Thomas yells at the **REPORTER** through the glass, but he's MUFFLED

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Hey! Scram!

Thomas and Lisa disappear behind the closing curtains.

The reporter turns back to the camera.

REPORTER

According to the police it is unknown whether or not this rope is the result of the Green's daughter, who at age 12 already has quite the criminal record. For ABC 7, I'm Leah Hope.

EXT. THE SKY - DAY

COP #1 looks straight up. He clings the rope, hands red, face dripping sweat.

Under his feet is another policeman, also holding on for his life, and another under him, and another under him. TEN COPS hang from the rope STACKED one on top of the other.

COP #1 loses grip. He rope slides under his red hands.

THUD! The top officers ass COLLIDES with the head of policeman underneath him sending him down the rope and into the cop below him.

THUD! THUD! THUD! The chain reaction continues down the rope.

EXT. LAWN - DAY

The cops land in a GROANING PILE, arms and legs stick out from all directions in a tangled mess.

Sgt. Boyer sips coffee from the edge of the lawn, Thomas and Lisa right behind him. Boyer turns around.

BOYER

I'm going to call in more guys.
Guys with trucks. That'll do it.

LISA

Sorry, how long is this going to take? It's almost dinner and there's a lot of people around our house and--

BOYER

It'll be done when it's done.

Boyer walks past Lisa mid sentence, leaving Lisa staring at the vacant air where Boyer was standing.

THOMAS

What a capital "A" Asshole.

Thomas puts his hand on Lisa's shoulders.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Do you wanna go inside? Get a coffee?

Lisa continues to stare straight ahead, but now at the side of the house where she just barely spots he daughter's RIGHT FOOT disappear around the corner.

Lisa's lips tighten and her brow furrows.

INT. EMMA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Lisa bursts through the door, ready to pounce.

Emma sits in her desk chair by the window, she shifts awkwardly in her oversize hoodie, doing her best to appear casual and not out of breath. Lisa squints and raises and eyebrow at her daughter.

The rope can be seen over Emma's shoulder, dividing the view of the window in two.

Lisa relaxes her position and leans on the door frame.

A sea of unfinished projects, clothes, books maps and other things strewn about the floor divide the mother and daughter.

LISA

Emma, I'm already worried about whatever is going on out there. Can you please, please, give me one less thing to worry about, Doña?

EMMA

Nobody knows what's at the top, and if they cut it down no one will ever know.

LISA

It's at our house, Em. What if it's dangerous?

EMMA

What if it ins't.

LISA

We don't know that--

EMMA

Somebody should climb up it and find out!

LISA

And by 'somebody' you mean you.

Emma opens her laptop and shows her mom.

EMMA

One guy continuously climbed ropes the equivalent height of Mount Everest in less than 24 hours. But that's free hand. With an apparatus--

LISA

No! No! Absolutely not!

EMMA

But, Mom, somebody needs to go up there!

LISA

Then call that rope climber, or an explorer, or an astronaut, but it's not going to be someone with a mom that cares about them!

Lisa begins to exit, closing the door behind her, but not before Emma can get the last word in.

EMMA
Astronauts have moms, too.

LISA
Okay, well, if you ever go to
space, drop your mom a line and let
her know you're okay.

Lisa closes the door.

Emma exhales out of relief. A pile of FLARES fall from her
sweater onto the floor.

EXT. FRONT LAWN AND STREET - EVENING

Three trucks face west down the street outside the Green
home. Each one TIED to the BLUE ROPE. Their engines GRIND.

INSERT - LOCAL NEWS PIECE

The reporter holds the mic up to a **MIDDLE AGED WOMAN**.

WOMAN
I think it's some sort of an
attack, from a foreign country.

The news cuts to a **PASTOR** being interviewed.

PASTOR
It looks to me like it fell from
Heaven. Much like Lucifer.

EXT. FRONT LAWN AND STREET - DAY

Lisa moves through the surrounding chaos in front of her home
to find Thomas at the edge of the lawn holding the baby. He
passes Jason to her.

LISA
Boy, it's really turning into a
circus out here.

THOMAS
Yup. Clowns and all.

Thomas nods towards Sgt. Boyer who is standing in the bed of
the middle truck of the three, waving to the crowd around
him. The crowd CHEERS back at him.

Boyer steps down from the truck and tugs his tether, which is
tied to the back axel of the truck.

Boyer gives a thumbs up to the two other drivers and the three of them step into their respective trucks.

The three trucks REV their engines and the crowd ROARS.

In a moment: The trucks take off at FULL SPEED. Their tethers CATCH the rope. The rope DOES NOT GIVE. The bumpers FLY OFF of the two outside trucks. The bumpers hit the ground but the trucks keep going. Boyer's truck loses its back wheels and BANG crash to the pavement.

The rope quietly drifts back into place.

The door of the wrecked truck flies open and Boyer stumbles out. He pulls the gun from his holster and FIRES six rounds at the rope.

The crowd SHRIEKS in horror. Everybody ducks. Thomas holds Lisa and Jason tight.

Each bullet WHIZZES right past the rope. It bobs and weaves from the passing fire, as if it's dodging the bullets.

Boyer fires his last shot, knocking him off balance. He falls backwards onto his ass.

BOYER
MEDIC!! MEDIC!!

The doors of the ambulance swing open and **TWO EMT'S** spring out with a stretcher.

But the stretcher has lost its front wheels and nose dives straight into the ground. The two medics collapse on top of each other.

Boyer picks himself up, red faced and confused. He looks at the scene around him.

From Boyer's POV we see a rowdy crowd he has no control over. A dozen officers lounging and chatting. His truck is missing a hubcap for reasons he can't understand. And a little girl is... *laughing?*

Above, from the window, the little girl who has been a complete pain in his ass is laughing at him.

Boyer gets to his feet and turns his attention to the Lisa and Thomas. He yells at them from across the lawn.

BOYER (CONT'D)
You're sure that kid had nothing to do with this? Seems like she's more trouble than she's worth!

Thomas quickly moves across the lawn and gets right in Boyer's face, but Lisa somehow beats him there. Her pointer finger lands an inch from Boyer's nose.

LISA

Do not talk about my daughter!

BOYER

I've heard about that girl.
Arrested for hopping a train. How
she had to be pulled out of the
sewer. How she was found in Indiana
floating down the river in an inner-
tube.

LISA

It was a raft, okay? A raft she
built herself.

Boyer moves in closer to Lisa leaving a paper thin gap between their noses. He speaks through his teeth.

BOYER

You and your family better stay
outta my way, because that thing is
coming down right now.

Boyer whips around to the dozen other officers huddled together across the yard. He nods to his men.

The men march over to a nearby police car and open the trunk. Each one pulls a torch from the car. One officer lights his torch and the others feed off his flame.

Twelve torches attached to the arms of twelve police officers burn at the base of the rope. The red flames lick the royal blue rope until it begins to burn. Each officer steps back. The flames begin to climb the rope.

Lisa looks on in horror. Her eyes fill with tears. She looks up at Emma's window but can no longer see her daughter.

INT. GREEN HOME - EVENING

The front door of the Green home slams open as Lisa bursts in. She sprints through her home and up the stairs with one driving thought: find Emma.

Lisa leaps to the landing at the top of the stairs. She grabs the door handle and bursts through the door of Emma's room.

INT. EMMA'S BEDROOM - EVENING

But Emma's not there.

Lisa quickly scans the empty room before shutting the door again.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

Lisa takes a moment to catch her breath and think.

A crash and an "Ah crap!" come from behind the door. Lisa once more barges in...

INT. EMMA'S BEDROOM - EVENING

...And there she.

Emma looks caught, frozen in position with one foot out the window and in her hands a climbing device she has built herself: a pulley built from the wheels of the stretcher attached to the hubcap from Boyer's truck, and under the hubcap hang eight emergency flares.

The blue rope hangs in the window with the orange glow from the fire beneath it.

Lisa stands in the doorway, looking on at her daughter.

EMMA

Mom, they're destroying it! They're destroying the rope and we'll never know what's up there! We'll never know--

Lisa runs in and scoops up Emma in her arms, squeezing her tight. The two Green women hold each other, each ones tears falling on the other's shoulder.

Lisa leans back, taking Emma's face in her hands, wiping the tears from her cheeks.

LISA

Just promise me you'll be safe.

Emma reaches for an old half helmet on her bedroom floor and puts it on.

EMMA

I promise.

Lisa laughs and kisses the top of Emma's helmet.

Emma picks up her pulley device and climbs into the window frame.

EXT. FRONT LAWN- EVENING

The heat is too hot to bear for Boyer and he steps back as the flames rise.

Suddenly, Emma leaps from her window! She's mid air. One foot stretched way out in front of the other. Her pulley device in one hand. Her other reaching for the rope, fingers spread wide.

Everything below her moves on **slow motion**. She can see the fire below her, the blood thirsty crowd that extends beyond sight, and Boyer watching her fly through the air with shock and rage on his face.

The rope is so close, but she begins to dip. She can't reach. She's not going to make it.

Lisa yells from Emma's window.

LISA
THOMAS!!!

Thomas looks up.

THOMAS
I GOT HER!

Emma lands safely in her Dad's arms and he launches her right back up at the rope.

She catches it, and in one motion the wheels of her pulley lock into place on the rope. Emma holds tight, seated squarely on the hubcap with flares hanging underneath.

She looks down at her dad.

EMMA
Love you, Dad.

THOMAS
Love you, too, Kiddo.

Emma looks straight up at the rope.

The flames catch up with Emma and ignite the flares. With a loud SIZZLE, Emma and her device SHOOT UP the rope.

Upwards into the sky, beyond the clouds and out of sight. We can hear a faint squeaking of the pulley wheels before all evidence of Emma has vanished completely.

Lisa, Thomas, Boyer, the other officers, the mob, the newscasters all stand silently with their necks craned all the way back, their eyes stuck where the rope meets the clouds. Only the crackling of the fire at the base of the rope breaks the silence.

We fade to an hour later and the crowd has shrunk. Firemen have arrived and douse the rope. Lisa and Thomas hold each other and continue to look upwards.

We fade to another hour later and only a few members of the crowd remain. Lisa and Thomas continue to look up.

We fade to another hour. It's dark now and everyone has left the Green home except for the Greens themselves, who continue to stare upwards into the night sky.

Lisa and Thomas look at each other. Thomas motions to the door, and the two hold each other as they walk back inside.

Something begins to spiral down the rope. As it gets closer we can see it's a BRIGHT BLUE PAPER PLANE.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

The paper plane breaks from the rope and flies into the crack of the door. From the wings we can see that there is a letter inside which starts, "Dear Mom and Dad," and ends "Love, Emma".

CREDITS